

*Orthodoxy and Charity united:*

IN SEVERAL RECONCILING

E S S A Y S

ON THE

Law and Gospel, Faith and Works;

V I Z.

- ESSAY I. The Substance or Matter of the Gospel.  
II. The Form of the Gospel.  
III. The Use of the Law under the Gospel.  
IV. Mistaken ways of coming to GOD without Christ.  
V. A plain and easy account of Saving Faith, or coming to GOD by Jesus Christ.  
VI. A reconciling thoughton various Controversies about Faith and Salvation.  
VII. Against Uncharitableness.  
VIII. The difficulties in Scripture, and the different opinions of Christians.  
IX. An Apology for Christians of different Sentiments.

*Speaking the Truth in Love. Ephes. iv. 15.*

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## The P R E F A C E.

**A**LMOST every one of these Essays was written above twenty years ago, and some of them more than thirty. The author finds reason to offer his sincere thanks to Almighty God, who has preserved him, even to this day, in the same sentiments of Christian Faith and Love, amidst the numerous follies and errors of the times. The Reader will be sufficiently informed of the reason of this Publication, by a mere explaining of the Words of the Title.

ORTHODOXY and CHARITY united.

By the word *Orthodoxy*, the Author means all those Christian doctrines which were generally approved in the last age, by almost all the Protestant Dissenters in the nation; even those great doctrines on which the Reformation from the church of Rome was built.

1. By the fall of the first man, he, together with his posterity, lost their innocence and their immortality, their bodies were subjected to diseases and death, their natural inclinations were perverted from that which is good, and there was a strange prevailing bias in human nature, even from its infancy, to that which is evil.

2. In order to their recovery from this ruin, there is not only a necessity of the pardon of their sins, and reconciliation of their persons to God, but there is need also that their sinful nature be healed, and renewed by sanctifying grace, in order to restore men to virtue and piety, i. e. to the love of God and their fellow-creatures.

3. The SON of GOD, who in the language of Scripture is *one with the Father*, came down from heaven to take flesh, and therein to fulfil the duties of the law, and give an example of perfect holiness : and then he was appointed to suffer death as a sacrifice and atonement for the sins of men, that mankind might thereby obtain pardon and the favour of God.

3. There is a necessity also that sinners should heartily repent of their sins, return to God, and be renewed to the principles and temper of holiness, in order to their compleat recovery to eternal life and happiness.

5. Besides this repentance and returning to God, it is also required that they believe in the name of Jesus Christ their Saviour, or trust in him with a humble expectation of the favour of God through him : and it is through this faith they are to be justified and accepted of God.

6. They are also obliged to obey the law of God, as far as this feeble and imperfect state admits of, during their whole life, and still to grow up towards perfection therein.

7. When such persons die, their souls are conveyed to a state of peace and rest in the presence of God, till the great day of the resurrection, when their bodies shall rise again from the dead, and the whole person, body and soul, be made happy for ever in the favour and presence of God their Maker.

These doctrines were generally professed at the  
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## The P R E F A C E.

time of the Reformation, by Protestants abroad and at home, and these are the sett of principles which have been usually called *Orthodoxy*, or right sentiments.

Now it has unhappily fallen out, that many of those who have received and professed these important doctrines, have differed in many lesser points, such as the logical relations of some of these doctrines to one another, that is, "Whether faith or works be conditions or consequents of their justification and acceptance; what is the essential difference between the *Covenant of Works* and the *Covenant of Grace*, or the *Law* and the *Gospel*," &c. as well as in several particular practices of divine worship, such as ceremonies, vestures, imposed forms of prayer, &c. and they have so far quarrelled about these things as too much to neglect and abandon that christian love they ought to have maintained, according to their general acknowledgment of the great and necessary truths of christianity, and hereby they have in many instances lost that duty and character of good Christians, to love one another.

Now since these unhappy and uncharitable practices, amongst some good men, have prevailed to this day, it is the design of these *Essays* to endeavour the recovery of these persons, who unite in these principles, to charitable sentiments and practices towards one another.

Here it will be very natural to enquire, where is there found amongst all these *Essays*, any at-

tempt to reconcile those to the Christian love of others, who while they profess the Christian Religion, yet oppose, renounce or deny the great doctrines of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, or his propitiation for sin by his death?

All the answer that can be given is this: The author would gladly have done it, that the whole book might be of a piece, and every page might overflow with Love, if he could, after the turning over his New Testament, have met with any evident instances, or examples, any plain rules or requirements of such Christian Charity expressed towards persons of this character in all the sacred writings.

But the language of Scripture gives no encouragement to such a Charity; for this doctrine is not any where numbered among the doubtful disputables of our religion, the lesser things of christianity, such as meats and drinks, and observation of days, and outward forms of worship; but it is spoken of as a matter of far higher importance, and I think seems to be necessary to constitute Christianity itself.

This doctrine contains in it the highest and the kindest design toward men, for which our blessed Saviour came down from heaven; it was for this very reason he came into this world, "to give his life a ransom for sinners," Matt. xx. 28. and it is repeated in Mark x. 45. So that those who depart from, and renounce this article, renounce the kindest design of the death of Christ, and they  
seem,



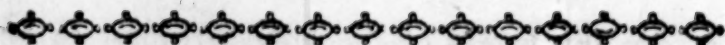
seem, by the words of the holy writings, to be exposed to another sort of sentence, from which may the grace of God recover and preserve them!

In the mean time, I hope those who heartily unite in their sentiments of these great doctrines which I have mentioned, and maintain a correspondent practice of strict holiness and dependance upon Jesus Christ our great High-Priest, and our Sacrifice, will be taught by some of these papers, to learn the duties of Christian Love more perfectly, agreeable to the original design of the holy founder of our religion.

It should be observed here, that though the chief part of these Essays were written at the time which is mentioned, yet there happened to be now and then a few lines and some few citations from elder or later authors, which were not all written or inserted at that time.

Let it be observed also, that all the characters here mentioned are general and indefinite; and there is not one character or name, that is now written in these papers, or ever was, that was designed to be applyed to any particular person: for the author avoided it with care in all these writings, and in all his reviews of them, that no single person whatsoever should be so particularly described, as to imagine himself to be intended, and much less to be distinguished by any reader. May the divine blessing attend every humble attempt to establish the Christian Faith, and to confirm and enlarge our Love. Amen.





## ESSAY I.

### *The* SUBSTANCE *or* MATTER *of* *the* G O S P E L.

#### S E C T. I.

THE Word, *Gospel*, is used in more senses than one. Sometimes it signifies the history of the life and doctrine, the death and resurrection of Christ. So Mark i. 1. "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God." And so it is used in common speech, when we call the writings of the four Evangelists *the four Gospels*. But in the most proper and useful sense of it in scripture, it signifies a *discovery of divine mercy, through a Mediator, to mankind fallen into sin and misery*; therefore in Greek it is called *εὐαγγέλιον*, or *glad tidings*.

The English name indeed, as derived from its Saxon original, signifies only the *Word of God*: yet it is now peculiarly applied to the *word of his grace*, which reveals salvation to sinful and miserable man, and therefore it is often called the *Covenant of Grace*.

This salvation is made up of many blessings, part of which are bestowed in this world, and the rest in the world that is to come. The revelation of these benefits, and the foundation on which they stand, and the way whereby we came to be partakers of them, is the *sum and substance* of the Gospel, in its most general notion among christians.

This Gospel was not revealed all at once in its full glory to mankind. There have been several editions of it, or gradual discoveries of his grace in all the former ages of the world.

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I. § 1. The SUBSTANCE of the GOSPEL. 9

As soon as ever Adam had sinned, and ruined himself and his posterity too, by laying the foundation of their sin and misery, it pleased God to publish this Gospel by the promise of a Saviour, when he told our mother Eve, that "her seed should bruise the head of the serpent" that had deceived her, Gen. iii. 15. This, by our Divines, is usually called *the first Gospel*; for in the modern language of the New Testament it signifies, that "Jesus Christ should come into this world to destroy the works of the devil," 1 John iii. 8.

Doubtless Noah, the second Father of mankind, had some farther discoveries made to him, when the rainbow was appointed as the seal of a gracious covenant betwixt God and man: for the very promise of the continuance of the comfortable seasons of the year, being given to man in a way of mercy, do imply that God would not be irreconcilable to his fallen creatures. Nor can we reasonably suppose but that Adam and Noah, and all those ancient patriarchs, had larger explications and comments of the first promise given them than Moses has recorded.

This Gospel was renewed by revelations made to Abraham, when the Messiah, the Saviour, was promised to spring out of his family; "in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." Which promise is expressly called the *Gospel*, Gal. iii. 8. There was also a type or pattern of our justification by faith in the way of the Gospel, when "Abraham believed God in his promises, and it was imputed to him for righteousness," Rom. v. 3.

Moses had a much larger discovery of the grace and mercy of God toward sinful man made to him, and to the Jews by him, than all the patriarchs put together: And this was not only done in the types, figures, and ceremonies; not only in altars, sacrifices, washings, sprinklings, purifications, and in their redemption from Egypt, their

miraculous salvations in the wilderness, and their safe conduct to Canaan, the land of promised rest; but he had many literal and express revelations of pardoning and sanctifying grace, which are scattered up and down in the five books which he wrote, and which he gave the children of Isreal to direct their religion. This is also called *the Gospel*, Heb. iv. 2. "To them was the Gospel preached as well as unto us," as those words ought to be translated. This same Gospel was afterward confirmed, illustrated and enlarged by succeeding prophets in the several ages of the Jewish church.

But *God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke this Gospel to our fathers by the prophets, has in these latter days published the same to us in a brighter manner, by his Son Jesus*, the promised Saviour, Heb. i. 1. And since the death and resurrection of Christ, the Apostles being sent by their exalted Lord, have given yet plainer and fuller declarations of this Gospel to the children of men.

And upon this account it is several times called *the Gospel of Christ*, not only because the offices and grace of Christ run through the whole of it, but also because the clearest discoveries of it are made to the world by Christ, and by his messengers the Apostles.

Now, from this last and fullest revelation of it in the New Testament, we may derive a fuller and more perfect knowledge of the Gospel than all the former ages could attain. Hereby we learn, that the Gospel is a *promise of salvation from sin and hell, by the death, righteousness and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to every one that is sincerely willing to accept of it by coming to Christ, or trusting in him; and it includes also the promised aid of the Holy Spirit to those who seek it, to enable them to receive this salvation, and to fit them for the final possession of the promised glory.* It includes also the revelation of the future Resurrection, the last Judgment and  
eternal

*eternal Life.* To this end did the "Son of God come into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting Life," John iii. 16.

This may be made out and explained more at large in the following manner.

The *salvation* which the gospel proposes, is exactly answerable to our present state of sin and wretchedness, and fully supplies all the necessities of fallen man, his guilt and deserved misery, his sinful and corrupted nature, and his utter inability to help himself; and therefore it must contain in it holiness and happiness, with divine directions and divine aids in order to attain them. The *happiness* of it is a freedom from that death and punishment which we had incurred by sin, and a recovery to the favour of God which we had lost, and everlasting joy therein. The *holiness* of it is the image of God in which we were at first created, which image was defaced and ruined by man's first transgression.

The foundation of this salvation is the eternal mercy and goodwill of God the Father, to his poor, perishing, sinful creatures, by the glorious undertaking and various transactions and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator, and the several operations of the blessed Spirit.

This salvation, in the whole of it, is contrived and appointed by the various attributes of God, especially his wisdom, power and goodness, exerting themselves for this purpose: it is purchased or procured for us by the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ: it is applied to us by the work of the Holy Spirit.

We are chosen to partake of all this salvation, both the holiness and happiness of it, by the eternal goodwill of the Father. We are recovered to the favour of God, and happiness, by the obedience or righteousness, *the death and intercession of*



our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God in our nature. We are restored to the image of God and holiness by the Spirit of Christ, that is promised and sent down into this world, to change our hearts and reform our lives, and thereby fit us for the heavenly happiness.

But what are we to do that we may become partakers of this salvation? For it is not every son and daughter of Adam who are possessors of it. Now it is the Gospel that reveals this to us, and also directs us in it. The appointed way to partake of this salvation is by *believing or trusting in Christ*: that is, when from a deep sense of the evil of sin, and our guilt and danger on that account, we grow weary and heavy laden with the burden of our sins, and surrender or trust ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, that by his death and obedience we may be saved from hell, and be accepted unto eternal life, and that by the aid of his Spirit, we may have all the powers of our nature renewed and sanctified, and fitted for that life eternal which Christ has purchased. Thus you see this grace of faith necessarily draws along with it sincere repentance for sin, and desires after true holiness.

When we consider that we are by nature afar off from God, ignorant and averse to all that is holy, we shall find that we are not more able to believe unto salvation, nor to repent of sin, at first, than we are to perform works of holiness afterwards. Therefore this Gospel provides us with divine strength to fulfil these duties; *Christ is our strength*, as well as *our righteousness*. He is *exalted to bestow repentance* as well as *forgiveness*; and "Faith is the gift of God, who creates us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, Isa." xlv. Acts v. Eph. ii. and makes us holy by his Spirit, as is before expressd. It is by the Holy Spirit considered eminently as the Spirit of Christ, that we are enabled to receive this salvation at first, and trained up and prepared for the full possession of it. It

It is further also comprehended in this Gospel, and promised in this *gracious constitution of God*, that when we have finished our state of trial on earth, our souls shall be received at death into the presence and enjoyment of God; and our bodies also shall be raised from the grave in the great resurrection day, and thus our whole nature shall be made happy together to all eternity.

This is the *matter* and *subject* of the gracious revelation of God, this the *method of salvation*, and the manner of our partaking of it, which is appointed by God himself, and this is what I call the *Substance of the Gospel*. There are some other points of importance that belong to it, but this is the foundation of all, and comprehensive of the rest.

To sum up the several parts of it in as few words as I can, *the Gospel of Christ* is a gracious constitution of God for the recovery of sinful man, by sending his own Son in the flesh to obey his law, which man had broken, to make a proper atonement for sin by his death, and to procure the favour of God, and eternal happiness for all that repent, believe and receive this offered salvation, together with a promise of the Holy Spirit to work this faith and repentance in the hearts of men, to renew their sinful nature unto holiness, to form them fit for happiness on earth, and to bring them to the full possession of it in heaven.

All this is so evident from a variety of scriptures that might be cited here, that one would think there should be no need to prove it. But there have been some persons in the last and in the present age (I chiefly intend the *Socinian* writers, and those *nominal Christians* who are leaning toward *Deism*) who would impoverish and curtail the *Gospel of Christ*, and make it to consist in little more than mere *natural religion*. Some of these persons just make a shift to persuade themselves to believe  
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the Bible, or at least they profess to believe it, because it is the religion of their country, but they explain it in so poor, so narrow, so dry, and insipid a manner, as raises it very little above the *light of nature*, viz. "That if we follow the dictates of our inward reason and our conscience, in worshipping God, and in loving our neighbour according to the rules which scripture hath given us to explain and confirm the light of nature, and herein imitate the holy example of our Lord Jesus Christ, then our sins shall be forgiven us by the mere mercy of God, through the supplication and intercession of so good a man as Jesus Christ, and we shall be accepted to eternal life;" and this without any dependance on the *death of Christ* as a proper atonement or satisfaction for sin, or any regard to him as a true and real sacrifice. And as for the *Spirit of God*, and his almighty operation on the souls of men, to enlighten and sanctify them, at least in our age, this is almost banished out of their Gospel, and finds but little room in their religion.

I think it necessary therefore to prove, that the *Gospel of Christ* is such a doctrine as I have described; and that I shall do by these five reasons.

§ II. 1. This doctrine, which I have now mentioned, of the restoration of believers in *Jesus Christ* to the favour of God, by the atoning sacrifice and obedience of *Christ*, and the renewing of sinful men to God's image by the work of the Holy Spirit, and thereby bringing them to eternal life, is the very Gospel of *Christ*, because it is the labour and business, the chief scope, aim and design of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, in those of his Epistles where he sets himself professedly to explain the Gospel; and this is what he takes frequent occasion also to bring into all his writings. It is his perpetual labour to instruct the Jews and Gentiles in these glorious and unknown truths: he uses various forms of speech

speech to explain them to their understandings; for "*I desire, saith he, and determine to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified,*" i. e. nothing like it; nothing in comparison with it. Is the *cross of Christ*, that is and must be the great subject of my ministry; this is what I am sent to preach, for it is the "power of God, and the wisdom of God, for the salvation of men," Rom. i. 16. 1 Cor. i. 24. and ii. 2.

You find his letters to the churches full of such expressions as these, "Christ died for our sins. He gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity. We have redemption through his blood. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them. He was made sin, and a curse for us. He is our Propitiation, and Atonement. He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by his death. He made peace by the blood of his cross. He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. By the righteousness of one man the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. By the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous; and we are justified by faith in him." He teaches us also the offices of the Holy Spirit. "We have access to God through his Spirit. We are purified and sanctified by the Spirit." It is *by the Spirit of Christ* that we are to *mortify the deeds of the flesh*. "We are led by the Spirit;" and we are taught to understand this Gospel *by the Spirit which he hath given us. We are sealed by this Spirit unto the day of redemption. The Spirit dwelling in us is a pledge and earnest of our inheritance in heaven.* Rom. viii. 13. Ephes. ii. 18. and iii. 16. and iv. 23. 2 Thes. ii. 13, &c.

Now these expressions of his are to be understood in the common sense and meaning of the words, and not as far-fetched metaphors; for it is evident,  
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that in all this he does not affect the arts of oratory, nor assume a magnificent air of writing, nor does he raise himself into sublimities of stile, nor rove in an enthusiastic way, when he treats of these subjects; but while he is explaining to us these great things of the Gospel, he avoids *the wisdom of words* and oratory, and he talks in a plain, rational, and argumentative method to inform the minds of men, and give them the clearest knowledge of the truth.

Surely a person that was sent of God to preach and write the Gospel for the use of all nations and future ages, and even for the ignorant and un-instructed Barbarians, would not have expressed himself in this sort of language, if he meant no more by it than the Socinians do by the gospel of Christ; that is, "that the Lord Jesus Christ was a very great man, but a mere man still; he was a prophet ordained of God to preach up holiness in greater degrees than it had been before preached, to settle some points which were left a little doubtful by the light of nature, to assure us that God would be reconciled to man, and forgive him, if man repented and was sorry for his sins and lived as well as he could for time to come; and that for the sake of the prayers of Christ, who was so very pious, so very religious, and so very heavenly, a person, and so submissive in his sufferings to the will of God, he would favour the penitent among mankind with some blessings and comforts in this world, and eternal life in the world above. Then when he had preached this doctrine to the world, he suffered the death of the cross, to bear witness to the truth of it, and sealed it with his blood, and rose again for a further confirmation of the same doctrine." Now if this were all the meaning of the *Gospel of Christ*, St Paul would never have preached it in such language as he did. We must suppose him to be a very inaccurate Writer,  
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a most unintelligible Preacher, and a most unfit man to be made an Apostle, and be sent to instruct the ignorant world, if he had expressed himself in and such mysterious, figurative, and strange phrases, all this while had meant no more by them than what the Socinians mean by their Gospel.

Can we think God would have employed such an instrument as this was, whose way of talking would have rather deceived multitudes than informed them of the truth, would have led them into the dark rather than have given them light, would have filled their heads with mysterious words without ideas, and instead of leading them into the way of salvation, would have left them in bewildered thoughts about the doctrines and duties of it with so much entanglement and confusion?

Here I might add also, that the holy Apostle not only instructs his own countrymen the Jews, and the Gentile strangers, in this divine doctrine, and teaches them to build their hopes of Salvation upon it; but *he ventures his own soul, his immortal concerns, and his everlasting hopes upon the same foundation.* He *glories in the cross of Christ*, he has *committed his all into his hands till the great judgment day*; *he lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, faith he, and gave himself for me,* Gal. vi. 14. 2 Tim. i. 12. Gal. ii. 20. It is the pleasure of his tongue, it is the joy of his pen, it is the delight and the life of his spirit to talk of these things: He hangs upon this subject, and knows not how to leave it; his very heart and soul is in it, and he abandons all things for the sake of this knowledge. He despises the former privileges of his birth, of his learning, of the Jewish prerogatives and rites. He renounces all his legal and ceremonial perfection, and all his honour amongst the Priests and the Pharisees in comparison of this. "What things were gain to me, says he, those



those I count loss for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death," Phil. iii. 7, &c.

Nor is the Apostle Paul singular in this respect, or different in his sentiments from the other Apostles. You find Peter and John saying the same things in their Epistles; and they take every occasion to publish the same Gospel, and the same promises and hopes of salvation, by the death and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the enlightening and sanctifying operations of the same *Spirit*. It would be endless to cite all the proofs of this. Now, it is not to be supposed that the three chief writers among the Apostles should all conspire to talk in the same mysterious and unintelligible language, so widely different from the common and obvious sense and meaning of their words, if they intended no more by them than the Socinians mean by their Gospel, which is very little different from the way of salvation that the Deist proposes, while they deny the Satisfaction of Christ, and his real and proper *Atonement for sin*, and the powerful *sanctifying influences* of the Holy Spirit.

II. As this Gospel of Christ which we have described, was the labour of the Apostle's ministry, and the design of the revelation of the New Testament, so it is this Gospel which is often hinted and prophesied in the Old Testament also, and typified by the ceremonies of the Jewish religion. Now these prophecies could not have been fulfilled,  
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nor these types answered and accomplished, without such a Gospel as I have explained.

The prophecies of the Old Testament are various and many: some of the clearest of those which relate to the sufferings and atonement of Christ, and to our justification by him, are express by Daniel, Isaiah and Jeremiah. By Daniel we are told that the "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself," and the design of this is to "finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquities, and to bring in everlasting righteousness," Daniel ix. 24, 26. Isaiah speaks the same thing more largely. Christ "was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. We like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. It pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin. By the knowledge of him shall he justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities." How exceeding plain and strong is this language to support this doctrine. Isaiah liii. 5, 6, 10, 11. "In the Lord shall we have righteousness and strength: in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory," Isaiah xlv. 24, 25. And the prophet Jeremiah expressly calls Christ "The Lord our righteousness," Jerem. xxiii. 6.

The promise of Sanctification by the Spirit of God, is given us in Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall be my people and I will be your God."

This sort of language is repeated chap. xi. 19. and Jerem, xxxii. 39, 40. Jerem. xxxi. 31, 32, &c. which is cited by the Apostle Paul in his Epistles to the Hebrews, and to the Corinthians,



as the language of the Gospel, or the new covenant. Now it is manifest enough, that all these expressions of glorious grace, and of the method of our reconciliation with God, our sanctification and salvation could never be answered and accomplished without such a Gospel of Christ as we have described.

The rights and ceremonies of the Jewish church speak the same thing, if we consider them as types and figures of the Gospel-state. I will grant indeed that many of those ceremonies had also some other intendments; To distinguish the nation of Israel and their religion, from the Gentile world, and the fantastical inventions of Pagan worship: to keep them in subjection to God as their political head or king: several of their sacrifices and methods of purification were appointed to cleanse them from ceremonial defilements, and to atone for civil or political crimes, whereby they were admitted to their civil rights again, and their place in the congregation, when they had done any thing to forget them.

But it is evident by the writings of the Apostle Paul, in 2 Cor. chap. iii. Gal. chap. iv. Coloss. chap. ii. Heb. chap. vii, viii, ix, x. that the great end of these Jewish ceremonial appointments was to stand as types and figures of things under the Gospel, and emblems of the various offices and benefits of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now in this figurative or emblematical sense, what did all the sacrifices and the blood mean, the burning beasts and the smoking altars, whereby the Jews made a typical atonement for their sins? What were they types of, what did they represent, if not the sacrifice of Christ? And what means the sprinkling all the people with the blood of animals, if these things did not typify and represent our being cleansed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is therefore called the *Blood of sprinkling*, and  
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which is the only real and substantial Atonement for sin? What meant their laying the hand upon the goat that was to bear their iniquities, and the confession of the sins of all Israel over his head, if they did not design to foretel the transferring of the sins of men upon the head of our Lord Jesus Christ, the surety and the sacrifice for sinners? What did the washings of water imply, but the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon sinful men, and the purification of their nature by divine grace? Why did that glorious and divine light dwell in the Tabernacle and in the Temple, and between the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies, if it were not an emblem of the *fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily* in the man Christ Jesus, in and by whom God was to converse visibly with the children of men? Can any man be so absurd as to believe, in opposition to so many expressions of the Apostle in his letters, that these sprinklings of water and of blood, these bleeding lambs and burning goats and bullocks, these vails, curtains and tabernacles served for nothing else but to wrap up the duties of the light of nature in them, and to explain (or rather to darken) the common truths of natural religion? And yet the Apostle tells us in several places, that these were types or figures of the Gospel of Christ. Surely every shadow bore the shape and figure of the substance: Every vail and covering was fitted to the body. All these were but shadows, but Christ is the *substance* or the *body*, and the shape of the body appeared therein to those that had divine light to discern it, and especially to us, whom St. Paul has taught to understand many of these mysteries.

Those therefore who impoverish the Gospel of Christ, as some writers have done, and deny the glorious doctrines that are included in it, they deny that Gospel which was foretold by the prophets, that Gospel which was hidden in the Jewish shadows

dows, and they refuse to see it, though it be now broken forth into open light

III. The Gospel of Christ must needs be such a doctrine as we have before described, it must needs be so far superior to all the dictates of the light of nature, to deserve those glorious characters which the Apostle frequently gives it, that it is the "wisdom of God in a mystery," 1 Cor. ii. 7. "the great mystery of godliness," 1 Tim. iii. 16. Col. i. 26. "A mystery hidden from ages and generations," Eph. iii. 3, 5. "The mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men" Rom. xvi. 25. "The mystery that was kept secret since the world began, hidden in God himself," Eph. iii. 9. And "is hid from the wise and prudent of this world," Matt. xi. 25. It is made up "of the deep things of God," 1 Cor. 2. ult. And derived from the depths of "his wisdom and knowledge," Rom. xi. 33. "It is the manifold wisdom of God, which was made known to principalities and powers by the church," Eph. iii. 10. "which things the angels desire to pry into," 1 Pet. i. 12. "in this he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence," Eph. i. 8. and it "contains the unsearchable riches of Christ," Eph. iii. 8. And "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Col. ii. 3.

Now such sort of descriptions as these are very applicable to the Son of God, who is also *one with the Father*, and who is *God blessed for evermore*, coming down to join himself to flesh and blood, that he might be able to die in stead of sinful men, and that this glorious person, *by whom the worlds were made*, and all the hosts of men and angels, Col. i. 15. that he should be made a sacrifice for our sins, that God might declare his unspotted holiness, or righteousness, his terrible justice, and his unchangeable hatred of sin, even "while he forgives sinners, and justifies those that believe in Jesus,"

Jesus," Rom. iii. 24, 25. and that this Lord Jesus in human nature should rise from the dead, ascend to heaven, be exalted to the "government of all things visible and invisible," Eph. i. 21. 23. should send his Spirit down to work faith, repentance and holiness in all his chosen and redeemed ones, and carry them through a thousand temptations and difficulties, and through death itself to heaven and glory. This is the doctrine that human reason could never have found out, and has much ado to be persuaded to receive it now it is manifested in the New Testament. These are wonders of unsearchable wisdom, and an entertainment for prying angels.

But if the Gospel of Christ signify no more than the mere promise of pardon to those that repent of their sins, and believe Jesus Christ to be a true prophet, and follow the example and commands of Christ, who has explained and confirmed the light of nature, what is there in this that deserves such a catalogue of glorious titles as the Apostle bestows upon this Gospel? there is no such great and deep contrivance, such astonishing wisdom in such a covenant of grace, as does nothing else but abate the severe terms of the Covenant of Works, and make repentance and imperfect obedience to serve instead of perfect obedience, in order to obtain pardon and happiness.

I confess there was need of some divine revelation to assure us that God would accept of our repentance and our honest endeavours, when in his law he demands perfection. But this any common prophet might have done, being sent of God and supported by miracles, as Elijah and Elisha were. And when once this doctrine was thus plainly revealed, there would be no great difficulty to persuade men to receive it, there are no such sublime mysteries and depths of wisdom and knowledge contained



contained in it ; nor does it need any extraordinary genius, much less divine wisdom itself, to have been the inventor of it.

But far be it from us to have such a diminishing thought of the glorious Gospel of Christ.

IV. Another reason that I shall give to prove that the Gospel of Christ is such a doctrine as I have before described, is the opinion both of the Jews and Gentiles concerning it, and the treatment that it met with both in Judea and amongst the nations.

It was counted *foolishness by the Greeks*, or the learned Heathens, and it was a *stone of stumbling to the Jews*. We “preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness,” 1 Cor. i. 23. Whereas if the doctrine of Christ crucified had implied no more in it than this, that Jesus by his death and martyrdom on the cross, bore a testimony to the truth of the doctrine which he preached, and that doctrine was nothing else but a discovery of God’s readiness to accept of sinners that repented and obeyed him, as well as they could, out of his mere mercy ; the Jews could never have been so much shocked or offended at it, for they believed as much as this long before St. Paul ever preached : Nor could the learned Greeks have counted that doctrine *folly*, which the wisest of their philosophers seemed to understand and teach. This sort of Gospel would have been so little different from what the light of nature might lead them probably to expect and hope for, that surely they would not have endeavoured to expose it and ridicule it, but rather they would have fallen in with St. Paul’s sermons, as being agreeable to so many of their sentiments. That Gospel therefore which both the Jews and the Greeks were so much offended with, that they reproached it as madness and folly, must be something strange to their ears, and exceedingly different from their own opinions.

V. I may add also at last, that if St. Paul had meant no more by the Gospel of Christ than this, that God was willing to be reconciled to mankind, if they would repent of their sins, and be sorry for them, and lived as well as they could for time to come, there had been very little reason for him to speak of his courage in preaching it so often as he does, and that with such an emphasis, Rom. i. 16. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation;" and he repeats it again, 2 Tim. i. 12. and encourages young Timothy to preach the same Gospel, *with boldness, and not be ashamed of Christ*, nor his ministers. He counts it a great thing, that he could "glory in the cross of Christ," Gal. vi. 14. and in his doctrine of *Christ crucified*, and is resolved to spread the favour of it round the world. "I am not ashamed of this gospel, I am ready to preach it among the Jews or the Barbarians, or in the city of Rome itself," Rom. i. 15. Now if he had preached nothing but the Socinian Gospel, there was nothing in it that would have exposed him to much shame and reproach for the hopes of forgiveness, upon meer repentance; and the enforcement of the duties of natural religion, with a little illustration and advance upon them, was much like the Gospel or doctrine of the wisest of the Heathen philosophers, that he had almost been esteemed one of those wise men, and rather treated with honour amongst them at Athens, and in other Gentile cities, and not been reproached as a *setter forth of strange gods*, and called a babbler for preaching such sort of doctrines.

But when the Apostle preaches the *Son of God in the likeness of man*, that came down from heaven, not to set up a throne in the world, and rule personally over the nations, but to be exposed to shame and pain, to be nailed to a cross, and have a crown of thorns put upon him, and indure all



these sufferings for the sins of mankind : when he tells the heathen world of a man that was hanged upon a tree at Jerusalem, and assures them, that his death is the foundation and spring of eternal life, to all that believe on him ; when he preaches, that the “ Lord of Glory was crucified,” 1 Cor. ii. 8. that so the worst sort of sinners might be saved, and “ that he who knew no sin was made a sacrifice for our sins, that we might ” stand righteous in the sight of God through his righteousness, 2 Cor. v. 21, this was something that sounded so strange in the ears of the Heathens, and the blinded Jews too, that they multiplied reproaches upon the sermons and the Preacher. And St. Paul thought it a considerable point gained, when he could assume such a degree of courage as to be able to say, I dare preach amongst the Gentiles, the Jews, the Pharisees and the Philosophers at Jerusalem, and at Rome, such a Gospel as this is ; “ for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.” This is an argument which, in my opinion, carries much evidence with it, that the *Gospel of Christ* is such a doctrine as I have before described.

But here a considerable *objection* arises against this description of the Gospel. How can the *Atonement* for sin by the death of Christ be so considerable a part of the Gospel, when Christ himself, the great prophet of his church, spoke so seldom and so very little of it during the whole course of his ministry ? Surely one would think so important a part of the christian doctrine should not have been neglected by Christ himself ?

### § III. *Answers to Objections.*

I. The great design of our Saviour in his publick appearance and ministry on earth, was to prove himself to wear the true characters of the Messiah, to deliver the Jews from many false expositions and glosses which the Scribes and Pharisees of that day had given to several parts of scrip-  
true,

ture, to lead the world to a conviction of their sins, and thereby prepare them to receive the doctrine of salvation with more zeal and desire; whereas the salvation itself, and the manner whereby it was accomplished, was but briefly mentioned in some few texts, and the rest was left to be explained by his Apostles.

2. The doctrine of Christ's Atonement for sin is intimated in several places of his own ministrations, Matt. xx. 28, "the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and gave his life a ransom for many." John x. 15, "I lay down my life for the sheep." John vi. 51, *The bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* And when he instituted the holy supper, Luke xxii. 19, "he took bread and brake it, saying, this is my body which is given for you." And as in St. Matthew's Gospel, "this cup is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

3. This doctrine of Atonement for sin by his death, as a sacrifice, and the acceptance of it with God the Father, could not be so well preached in public; before those very facts were fulfilled, upon which this doctrine is founded; for his death was the foundation of this Atonement; his resurrection and ascension to heaven, were the proofs of its being accepted with God: Now it might have appeared preposterous to our Saviour, who was divinely wise, to preach these doctrines freely in public to the multitude, before these events appeared in the world.

And even to his own disciples he was not too free in the communication of them, because, as John xvi. 12. he told them, "he had many things to teach them, but they could not bear them yet:" it might have been the means of raising some prejudices in the minds of his own disciples; whereas he reserved some of these things to be taught in

those forty days, while he continued with them after his resurrection, and “spake with them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God,” Acts i. 3.

And thence we may infer, that if we would learn the plainest and fullest account of the Gospel of Christ, it is not enough for us to consult merely his public sermons, or the histories of his life, which are called the four Gospels, but we must read carefully the writings of the Apostles, after he went to heaven; in which they taught these doctrines more compleatly, which they had learnt from the converse of Christ, after his resurrection, as well as by the pouring out of his own Spirit upon them in great abundance, as he had promised.

But there is another *objection*, which is borrowed from the Socinian writings, which it may be proper to give some reply to, *that it does not agree to the moral perfections of God to punish sin in a Surety; nor does it become the great God who is a being of infinite wisdom, goodness and equity, to appoint such a way of salvation for men, as would necessitate an innocent creature to be exposed to so many sharp sufferings as Christ underwent, while the guilty sinner suffers nothing of all these terrors, but is delivered from the severest of them by the death of Christ.*

In answer to this, I desire it may be considered, that this doctrine of the expiation and atonement for sin by Christ, is so plainly and expressly revealed in the New Testament, by the Apostles, as has been already shewn, and is so frequently repeated in many forms of speech in the sacred writings, that it seems a very bold imagination to suppose, that that could not be *agreeable to the moral perfections of God*, or that *it could not become God to appoint that*, which in so many repeated Scriptures, is expressly asserted to be done by Jesus Christ, and by the appointment of the Father. Can it be ever imagined, that the great God did not know what  
would

would become his perfections better than we little insects, just crept out of the earth, and returning thither again, could teach him? Can it be ever thought, that the Eternal Mind did not know what was decent for a just and a wise God to do, better than we can conceive or suggest?

I answer, in the second place, that some of the very expressions wherein this doctrine is represented in Scripture, are such as seem to be designed on purpose to obviate this very objection, particularly, Cor. v. 21, "God has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," he made him to be a sacrifice for sin for us, that we might be delivered from the guilt of sin, and accepted as righteous in the sight of God. Again, 1 Pet. iii. 18, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Again, 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22, "Christ suffered for us, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Again, 1 John ii. 1, 2, "Jesus Christ the righteous: he is the Propitiation for our sins." Thus you see all these texts declare expressly the innocence of Jesus Christ who suffered, and the iniquities of those for whom he suffered: It is evident enough that a righteous person died for the guilty, and the guilty were saved.

3. Let it be yet further considered, that the man Christ Jesus, who had a natural *will* which was distinct from the supreme *will* of the Godhead, gave up himself to those sufferings, and consented to it fully, Heb. x. 5,—10. "In burnt-offerings and sacrifices of beasts thou hadst no pleasure; but a body hast thou prepared me: then I said, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He had a right given him by the Father to lay down his life, and a right to take it up again," John x. 18. And he had an *additional exaltation* promised him on this



account, Heb. xii. 2. and actually bestowed on him for this service: Phil. ii. 9. "wherefore God hath highly exalted him," besides several other events in the divine scheme of God's government, for the glory of God, and the happiness of men. All which are sufficient to make the sufferings of Christ very consistent with the equity and justice of God, though the innocent creature suffered and the guilty was set free. So that I see no manner of inconsistency between this transaction, and any of God's moral perfections; and therefore I can see nothing in it which was unbecoming for God to appoint, or for Christ to submit to.

To confirm this, let it be remembered, that it is expressly said, Heb. ii. 10, "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings," τελειῶσαι, which signifies to consecrate Jesus Christ to be an High-Priest by this blood of atonement.

Nor is it all strange, that those who borrow from the Socinian writers, may raise such objections against the Atonement or Satisfaction of Christ for sin: since Socinus himself saith, *Should there be found some places of Scripture, where it should be expressly written, that God was made man, or did assume human flesh; they should not presently be taken according as the words sound, since that is altogether repugnant to the Divine Majesty.* So Socinus in his disputations of Jesus Christ. And again: *If not once only, but often it should be written in the sacred Scriptures, that Christ made satisfaction to God for sins; I would not therefore believe, that the matter is so as you imagine.* So Socinus on the Satisfaction. And again: *Any, even the greatest force is to be used with words, rather than take them in the obvious sense.*

## E S S A Y II.

## The F O R M of the G O S P E L.

§ I. *Is the Gospel a Conditional Promise?*

THE general nature and substance of the Gospel is agreed on all hands to be a *discovery of divine grace to sinful man through a Mediator*: but several parties of christians have raised endless debates about the particular form of it, (viz.) whether it be a mere absolute promise, or a conditional covenant: whether it contain in it commands and threatnings or no: or whether it be a new law.

It is my opinion concerning many of the debates about our religion, that they may be sufficiently determined for the peace and practice of christians, by finding out the various use of words in common language, and especially the sense of them in the holy Scriptures, and submitting our judgment and consciences to the sense of them, with a little reconciling explication. And this noisy controversy may, perhaps, come nearer to a decision, if we will but honestly consult the ways of speaking, that the Scripture useth in solving these three following questions.

But before I propose them, I would beg one favour of my readers, and that is, as they run over these pages, they would so far deny themselves of a common custom, as not to examine and judge of this little Essay by any systems of orthodoxy in their closet, or in their head, but by the only system, out of which I have drawn it, the Holy Bible; for in the whole composure of this discourse, I have not consulted one author besides; and I would chuse to be read just in the same way in which I write, and to be judged by the same rule.

The Gospel in its most general sense may be described as a declaration of the free mercy of God, for the salvation of fallen man by a Mediator.

As man by his fall hath lost the image of God and his favour, salvation includes the recovery of both these: it implies therefore repentance, regeneration, holiness and perseverance, as well as justification, adoption and glorification; we must be saved from our sins, as well as from the wrath of God, if we are made truly happy. Jesus the Mediator "saves his people from their sins," Matt. i. 21, as well as "delivers from the wrath to come." 1 Thes. i. ult.

These several blessings included in salvation, tho' they are all bestowed freely by grace, yet have a connexion one with another, and dependance on each other; therefore some of them are represented as foregoing, others as following; some as means, the others as the end. Repentance, Faith, Regeneration, Pardon, Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, Obedience, the Assistance of the Holy Spirit, and Perseverance, may all be esteemed as means, with regard to the great and final blessing of Glorification, which is the end; and indeed, every foregoing blessing may be reckoned in some sense, as a means with regard to that which follows.

Again, some of the blessings included in salvation, are to be wrought in us, as Repentance, Sanctification, &c. others to be only bestowed upon us, as Pardon of sin, Adoption, Eternal Glory, &c. Those that are to be wrought in us, are sometimes set forth in Scripture, as duties to be performed by us, to stir us up in a rational way to seek them; and those that are only to be bestowed upon us, are set forth as blessings to be conferred in consequence upon such duties performed; for God will save us still as intellectual creatures, under a moral government, and will have our rational powers used in obtaining and possessing this salvation;

## II. § 1. The FORM of the GOSPEL. 33

salvation; and therefore it is set forth as a proposed agreement between two intelligent beings, God and man, and is called the *New Covenant*, a *better Covenant*, and the *Word of Reconciliation*, Heb. v. 19

Upon these considerations, the Gospel or covenant of Grace is sometimes represented as a mere declaration of Grace, or an absolute promise in Scripture, and sometimes as a conditional one. It is represented absolutely in these texts, Gal. iii. 8, "The Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." Heb. x. 16, 17, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, faith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Though the word Covenant does usually signify an engagement on both sides, yet it is sufficiently evident, that in the language of Scripture it does not always imply mutual agreement; for it is applied to the day and the night, and their stated courses, to the beasts of the field, as inhabitants of this earth, Jer. xxxiii. 20, 25. Gen. ix. 9, 10.

All the blessings of the Gospel, both the means and the end, are represented in a way of free or absolute donation by the Apostle Paul frequently. So Eph. ii. 8; 9. "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works,"—*for we are his workmanship*, &c. In other places of Scripture the Gospel is represented in a conditional way, as Mark xvi. 15, 16. "Preach the Gospel to every creature, he that believeth shall be saved." Matt. xi. 28. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." John vii. 37, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," 1



### 34 The FORM of the GOSPEL. II. § 1.

John i. 9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," &c. These are properly called conditional propositions in a rational view of the relations of things.

And it may be observed, that those very parts of our salvation which in one Scripture are commanded as duties, in another are promised as blessings. So Repentance and Faith are duties required, Mark i. 15, "Repent and believe the Gospel:" They are *blessings* bestowed, Phil. i. 29, "To you it is given to believe," Acts v. 3, "God hath exalted him—to give repentance." And it is easy to bring instances of the like nature concerning several other parts of our salvation.

Now according to the distinctions I have laid down, the foregoing blessings which are as means, may be esteemed conditions with regard to others which are as the end of them: so Justification and Adoption, as well as Repentance and Faith, and Perseverance, all which are as means, may be called conditions in regard of glorification which is the last end. In that golden chain of salvation, Rom. viii. 30. Calling, Justification, and Glorification are three great links. "Whom he called, them he also justified, them he also glorified." But all agree if we are not called, we shall not be justified: If we are not justified, we shall not be glorified. Thus every blessing of salvation that in the necessary order of nature follows another, may be said to be suspended on that other, as a condition without which it shall not be bestowed.

Again, those blessings that are represented as our duty, and are to be wrought in us, may be said to be conditions with regard to consequent blessings that are only conferred upon us: (for the word condition, in its most common sense, does by no means imply that it must be performed by our own power, nor does it include any thing of a valuable consideration or merit in it.) And therefore

## II. § 3. The FORM of the GOSPEL. 35

fore in this sense, Faith may be called a *condition of Justification*, because Faith and Justification are connected together in Scripture, and Faith is represented as a foregoing blessing, and as a duty, Justification as a consequent blessing, and a privilege which is suspended upon it. Gal. ii. 16.

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the Faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified.” So the use of water is a condition of being made clean, so coming to the fire is a condition of being warmed, so the putting on a garment is a condition of being clothed, receiving a sealed pardon is the condition of a prisoner’s release, committing the body to a physician is the condition of a sick man’s being healed: And in this sense Faith is called a condition of our interest in Christ, by the Assembly of Divines in their larger Catechism under the question, “How is the grace of God manifested in the second covenant?” Answ. “In that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him, and requiring Faith as the condition to interest them in him, promiseth and giveth his Holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that Faith with all other saving graces, and to enable them unto all holy obedience, as the evidence of the truth of their faith and thankfulness to God, and as the way which he hath appointed to salvation.”

Nor can I see any sufficient reason why the grace of Faith, as a blessing conferred, may not be called the condition of a following blessing; and yet Faith, considered as a duty, may not be called a condition of the same blessing, since both the habit and the act of Faith are the effects of divine grace working in us and by us; and where Faith is proposed as a duty, it is represented more evidently in a conditional way than where it is mentioned as a mere blessing. And

And upon the same account, Holiness and Perseverance may be called the conditions of our compleat salvation in heaven, because Holiness and Perseverance are foregoing blessings and duties, and compleat salvation in heaven is the final privilege, Heb. xii. 14. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Matt. xxiv. 13, "He that endures to the end shall be saved." Nor doth Dr. Owen, nor other moderate writers in this controversy, refuse the use of the word condition in such a sense.

What I have said concerning the various blessings of the Gospel, may be applied also to the seals or symbols of it, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are seals on God's part, which he hath appointed for the confirmation of our faith, by the help of our senses, and that he might give us, a real pledge of the performance of his promises. Thus "Abraham received circumcision a seal of the righteousness of faith," Rom. iv. 11. Thus we receive baptism as a seal of our regeneration by the Holy Spirit; thus the Lord's Supper as a seal of our pardon and life by the crucifixion and death of Christ. But as great privileges as they are, thus granted to us, we must remember they are also duties to be performed by us, and are seals on our part of our engagement to be the Lord's. Nor have we any reason to expect the comforts that arise from these sealed blessings of the Gospel if we wilfully neglect the use of the seals: And in this sense they may be called conditions of the privileges, and comforts that are annexed to them.

I desire it here to be noted, that I speak not this to encourage and promote the common use of the word condition in these cases; for it is not used in Scripture, except once in a parable; and that not in the original, but only in our translation. The text is Luke xiv. 33; it is not at all to the purpose of the present controversy: The conditions there  
mentioned

## II. § 2. The FORM of the GOSPEL 37

mentioned are not the conditions of our salvation, but quite another thing: the design of the parable is to shew that those who have not courage to fight with their spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, must even make *conditions of peace with them*, that is, sit still and neglect Christ and religion.

Besides the word condition, (though it be an innocent and an useful and expressive word in the matter of duty and privilege,) yet it hath been ill explained by some Preachers, and worse understood by some hearers, and thereby it hath given great offence: I say this therefore only to shew that there is not so much heresy in those four syllables as some learned men pretend, and some unlearned believe and fear. If any man will fix such a rigid sense on the word Condition as is inconsistent with the grace of the Gospel, and then say, the Gospel has no conditions in it, I will not contend with him; for he speaks consistently with himself, and with Scripture too; because Scripture does not use the word: but if condition be taken in a very plain and common sense for *any one thing upon which another is suspended*, I do not know any Scripture that forbids the use of it, but such texts as these, 1 Cor. x. 32. "Give no offence to—the church of God. Rom. xv. 2. Please your neighbour for his good to edification."

### S E C T. II.

Quest. *Is the Gospel a new Law?*

*Whether commands and threatnings belong to the Gospel?*

Ans<sup>r</sup>. The word Gospel or *ευαγγέλιον*, though it signifies *glad tidings* in its original derivation, yet it is used in Scripture sometimes in a larger sense, as well as sometimes in a more proper and limited one.

When



When it is used in its proper and limited sense, it denotes a mere declaration of the good will of God for the recovery of fallen man: So the texts before cited Gal. iii. 8. Heb. x. 16, 17. and so 2 Cor. v. 19. where the Gospel is called *the Word of Reconciliation*, the substance of it is, that *God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.* So the first Gospel that ever was preached to Adam, after the fall, was a free discovery of mercy, Gen. iii. 15. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

When the word *Gospel* is used in its larger sense, it includes predictions, commands, promises, threatenings, histories, examples, and almost whatever is necessary to enforce those duties upon the consciences of men, which are as means appointed, in order to partake of the privileges.

So the *Gospel* contains in it narratives of matters of fact, or histories, Mark i. 1. "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," which seems to refer to all the following history of his life and death; and the four histories of the Evangelists are called *Gospels*, which title (if not divine originally, yet) has been the language of the church, through so many ages of christianity.

The word *Gospel* contains, also, some doctrines, Col. i. 5 "The hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of truth of the Gospel." The Gospel reveals truths before unknown to men. So "life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel," 2 Tim. ii. 1. e. doctrines of the heavenly state.

Commands, 2 Cor. ix. 13. *By the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ.* This subjection to the Gospel, implies, that liberality is commanded in it. Acts xvi. 21. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This is the command given to the convinced Jailor.

*Promises*

## II. § 2. The FORM of the GOSPEL. 39

*Promises and threatnings*, Mark xvi. 16. "preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned."

*Predictions*, particularly of the final judgment, Rom. ii. 16. "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my Gospel." That is, according as I have preached.

It is plain, that sometimes the *Gospel* is said to be the object of belief, as Mark i. 15. *Believe the Gospel*; and there it signifies a declaration of grace to sinners. Sometimes it is said to be the object of obedience, Rom. x. 16. "All have not obeyed the Gospel:" there it must include duties and commands.

It is also evident, that in many places of the New-Testament, the *Gospel* is used to signify the whole ministry of the Apostles, and all the subjects of their preaching, as Rom. i. 9. "Whom I serve in the Gospel." 1 Cor. ix. 14. "They that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel;" (viz.) be maintained not merely for preaching a promise, but for the whole of their ministration; and therefore the Apostle sometimes calls it *my Gospel*, and *our Gospel*, to signify his whole ministry.

Nor do I think there is any great difference, whether we include commands, threatnings, &c. in the word *Gospel*, taken in a large sense, or call them attendants of the *Gospel*, taking the word in a sense more proper and limited: for the language of Scripture seems to favour the one as well as the other.

But this is the mischief that ariseth between christians that differ in their sentiments or expression of things, they imagine that while one is true, the other must needs be false; and then they brand each other with error and heresy; whereas if they would but attend to Scripture, that would shew them to be both in the right, by its different explication

tion of their own forms of speaking. The *Gospel* hath or hath not commands and conditions in it, according to the various senses in which it is used.

And in this way of reconciliation I cannot but hope for some success, because it falls in with the universal fond esteem that each man hath of his own understanding; it proves that two warm disputers may both have truth on their side: Now if ten persons differ in their sentiments, it is much easier to persuade all of them that they may be all in the right, than it is to convince one that he is in the wrong.

### QUESTION.

*Whether the Gospel be a New Law?*

*Answ.* A Law in the proper and full meaning of the word, includes these three things in it.

I. That there be some command given out, wherein some duty is required, or sin forbidden by the just authority of a superior.

II. That there be a sanction, or penalty annexed to the neglect of that duty required, or the commission of that sin forbidden: this sanction is not always expressed, but it is always implied; for the authority that is sufficient to impose a command on any person, must also be sufficient to punish the breach of this command, and the offender is liable to bear it; otherwise the command would be a mere advice, and not a law.

III. That the performance of this duty or duties required, and abstinence from these sins forbidden, is our proper righteousness, or matter upon which we are justified in the court of this Law.

These three things are implied in every strict and proper Law: and I might prove it by instances of the chief laws that Scripture speaks of (*viz.*) the Law of innocency, the Law of nature, and the Jewish law.

Thus

## II. § 2. The FORM of the GOSPEL. 41

Thus it was in the *Law of Innocency* or covenant of works with Adam; the duties required, were all that the light of nature and reason enjoined to Adam in such circumstances, to which there was one positive prohibition added, "Thou shalt not eat of the tree of knowledge," &c. and the sanction and penalty is expressed; "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," Gen. ii. 17. and Adam's observance of this Law would have been his righteousness in the sight of God, and justified him before God, according to the general language of this, and all laws. "The man that doth them shall live in them," Gal. iii. 12. And it is generally agreed, that the tree of life was a symbol or seal of immortal life to Adam, if he obeyed the Law.

Thus it was also in the *Law of Nature*, or moral Law, which is very little different from the Law of Innocency, and this law is plainly described by the Apostle, Rom. ii. 12, 13, 14, 15. "The work of the Law is written in the hearts of the heathens," i. e. The general commands and penalties may be found by the light of nature, and "the doers of this Law shall be justified," this is the way of justification, according to the Law of Nature.

Thus it was also, in the Jewish law, which was not the Gospel, but an additional constitution, relating only to the Jewish nation, to be governed by God as their peculiar king. And it was really distinct from the Covenant of Grace or Gospel of salvation, whereby Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the Israelites themselves were to be saved. Some persons, indeed, call it a legal dispensation of the covenant of grace but it is more agreeable to the language of Scripture, to call it a distinct covenant, or a Covenant or Law of Works, as a Jewish appendix to the Gospel.

It



It is true, indeed, the Jewish Law had much of grace in it as well as much of terror, and in many parts of it, it represented, typified, witnessed and held forth the Covenant of Grace, whereby all believers in all ages are to be saved, as well as the original Law of Nature, or the general Covenant of Works, whereby all men are cursed and condemned; and the Apostle makes use of it in all these views in his Epistles to the Romans, Galatians and Hebrews: But the Jewish Law, in its own proper nature and design, was a special or particular *Covenant of Works* with temporal promises and temporal threatnings.

The duties enjoined were chiefly contained in the four books of Moses, and commonly called the moral, the ceremonial, and the political Law: the sanction is written in many parts of those books; some of the threatnings were to be inflicted on particular offenders by the Magistrate, such as, beating with rods, stoning to death, fines and amercements of money or goods, &c. Some were to be inflicted on the whole nation by GOD himself, if they transgressed this Law, such as plagues, famine, banishment from the land of Canaan, &c. Deut. xxxviii. and the *justifying righteousness* according to this Law, ~~was~~ their obedience to the precepts and ordinances of it, Deut. vi. 25. "And it shall be our righteousness if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our GOD, as he hath commanded us." So Deut. xxiv. 13. so Rom. x. 5. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doth those things shall live by them."

Now let us consider how far the Gospel partakes of the nature of the Law, and may be so called.

I. The Gospel taken in a large sense, hath so much of the nature of a Law in it, that there are commands given, duties enjoined, sins forbidden; and it hath a sanction also, for there are terrible penalties

## II. § 2. The FORM of the GOSPEL. 43

penalties annexed to the contempt or rejection of it, even a *much sorer punishment* than was threatened for the breach of the Law of Moses, Heb. x. 28, 29. And because it partakes so much of the nature of a Law, and hath such resemblance to it, it is in a few places of Scripture called a Law, without dispute. Isa. ii. 3, "The law shall go forth from Zion." Rom. iii. 27, "The law of faith."

II. The Gospel is not a Law in the full sense of the word, for it wants the third requisite of a Law. Whatsoever duties are required in the Gospel, the performance of those duties by us is not described in Scripture as the matter of our righteousness before God. There are many blessings promised, and blessednesses pronounced in the Gospel upon the discharge of various duties of holiness, which are prescribed in the New Testament; but in the court of God and his word, a sinner is not justified by any, or all these duties. Faith itself, which is the first and great requirement of the Gospel, is not our justifying righteousness, but is the way and means to obtain, or be possessed of a justifying righteousness. The righteousness by which we are justified under the Gospel doth not use to be represented as a righteousness wrought in us, or by us, or as a righteousness of works, or a righteousness of man; but it is mentioned as a righteousness from without us, a *given righteousness*, Rom. v. 27. "a righteousness imputed without works." Rom. iv. 6. And it is commonly called by St. Paul, *the righteousness of God*; it is a rectitude in the court of God including or inferring an absolution from guilt, and a right to heaven appointed, prepared and bestowed by God himself upon all them that believe; and it is received by our faith or trusting in Christ. "The righteousness of God is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe," Rom. iii. 22. And it is called "the gift of righteousness," in Rom. v. 17. as a very distinct

distinct thing from the *Gift of Faith*. Eph. ii. 8.

And here we may do well to take notice that tho' there are a great many differences between the Gospel, which St. Paul preached, and the Jewish Law, such as the multitude of arbitrary commands in the natural and civil life, the burden of many ceremonies, the temporal promises and threatnings, &c. yet the grand point of difference, which he frequently insisted on, is the different way of justification, (viz.) that the one is by works, the other not. (Always remembring that before God as the great Lord of conscience, and with regard to eternal life, the Jews were to be justified and saved by the same Gospel, and by faith, even as Abraham of old, and Christians now. (But with regard to God, considered as their political Governor or King by the Sinai Covenant, they were to be justified by works.) The blessed Apostle therefore treating accurately of these matters ever distinguishes the Gospel from the Law, whether it be the Law of Nature, the Law of Innocency, the Jewish Law, and indeed, from every thing that hath the full nature and form of a law, by this particular mark, (viz.) that our obedience to the law would be our justifying righteousness if we performed it; but obedience to the Gospel is not our justifying righteousness. So Rom. 2d and 3d chap.

The Jewish law 'considered as a special Covenant, or as it includes or represents the general law of nature) says, "peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew, and the Gentile: and the doers of the law shall be justified;" Rom. ii. 10, 13. But *the righteousness of God*, i. e. that righteousness whereby we are justified according to the Gospel, is a "righteousness without the law," a different thing from a law-righteousness, and is now manifested by the Gospel, and comes upon every believer, Rom. iii. 21, 22, &c. So Rom. x. 5, 6. "The righteousness of the law saith, the  
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## II. § 2. The FORM of the GOSPEL. 45

man that doth those things shall live by them: But the righteousness of faith faith, v. 9. if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe with thy heart—thou shalt be saved.” So Gal. iii. 11, 12, &c. “The law is not of faith,” for this very reason, because the law says, “do this and live, or obey and be justified.” But the Gospel faith, “The just shall live by faith. Believe and thou shalt be saved.” And in the following verses, the Gospel is represented under the term and title of a promise to distinguish it more evidently from a Law: for “if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law,” Gal. iii. 21. “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” This is the common language of Scripture.

And therefore instead of representing the several duties enjoined in the Gospel, as the matter of our righteousness before God, the New Testament sends us expressly to Jesus Christ for righteousness. So St. Paul tells us, Rom. iii. 2, 5. “Christ is set forth as a propitiation—that God might justify them that believe, and yet be a just and righteous God,” Rom. v. 17, 18, 19. “They that receive—the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ.—So by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life.—By the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous.” God will have a righteousness in his Gospel whereby “grace shall reign to eternal life,” Rom. v. ult. though it is not a righteousness of our own works, as the objection in the very next verse, Rom. vi. 1. evidently proves, and so Rom. x. 3. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all that believe,” 1 Cor. i. 30. “Christ is made of God righteousness to us;” and 2 Cor. v. 20. &c. where the Gospel is particularly described



scribed as the *Word of Reconciliation*, we are told that "Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," and this righteousness is expressly called "the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. i. 1. because it is the immediate result of his obedience and death. And it is upon this account in the Old Testament, he is more than once called, "The Lord our righteousness."

Now though our obedience to the first and great command of the Gospel (*viz.*) *Believing in Christ*, is not our righteousness, yet it is the way of our partaking of this righteousness; and therefore our justification or justifying righteousness is so often called "the righteousness of God by faith, and the righteousness of faith;" ἡ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη. Rom. ix. 30. Rom. x. 6. δικαιοσύνη διὰ πίστεως, and ἐν τῇ πίστει. Phil. iii. 9. all which are more properly rendered, "the righteousness that is by or through faith, or that comes upon our believing." In other places it is expressed, that we are *justified by faith*; but still in opposition to the works of any true and proper Law. And it is in this sense that *faith* is said to be "imputed or accounted for righteousness." Rom. iv. 5. it is not said, faith is our righteousness, or instead of a perfect righteousness, but λογίζεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην, i. e. in order to our justification; meaning, that of all the graces wrought in us, or actions done by us, faith is the only thing that God "makes account of or reckons to our advantage, in order to our justification," or our obtaining a justifying righteousness; and that not as a work or duty performed, as is proved by the context, but chiefly for this very reason, because it renounceth every thing of works, and goes out of self to depend intirely on grace, which is the design of all that fourth chapter, by a parallel instance of Abraham's not depending on his own sufficiency of nature, but on God's power to fulfill the promise.

Nor

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Nor is this exposition of the words εἰς δικαιοσύνην forced, for they are used exactly in the same sense in other places, even when it is joined with πίστεως, Rom. x. 10. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," i. e. in order to his obtaining a justifying righteousness, or in order to justification; so v. 4. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth."

This account of things gives a plain reason why the Gospel justifies and accepts those persons who perform an honest and sincere, but a very inconstant and imperfect obedience to the commands contained in it, although those duties are there commanded in perfection, (viz.) because it is not our obedience to those commands that is the justifying righteousness of the Gospel, but another righteousness that is given us, i. e. a freedom from guilt, and a right to life, when we obey the first great command, viz. "believing or trusting in Christ."

Whereas a proper law requires perfect obedience for justification: the language of every proper law is this; "cursed or condemned is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. and "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point he is guilty of all," James ii. 10. That can be no justifying righteousness according to a law which doth not arise to the perfection of the command, both for kind, for degree, for continuance, and for every circumstance. But the Gospel proposing another justifying righteousness to be received only by our faith, whether this faith be strong and perfect or no, yet it receives the righteousness, and the believer is justified. If a criminal lays hold on a pardon with a trembling hand, he is as safe from condemnation, as he that with courage reaches out his arm to seize it; because it is not his hand, but the pardon secures him. If an Israelite stung by a fiery serpent, could but just  
look

look with half an eye to the brazen serpent, he was healed, as well as another that beheld it with steady eyes. If the manslayer was ever so lame and feeble, yet if he could but reach the city of refuge, he was as secure from the avenger, as he that fled to it with the swiftest feet. So he that commits his guilty soul to Christ for salvation, tho' with a feeble faith, and far short of perfection, yet a righteousness is given him; the "righteousness of God is unto and upon all that believe, for there is no difference;" and a weak believer is as secure from hell as a stronger, though he cannot have so clear an evidence or so much comfort: And the reason of his safety is because his believing is not his justifying righteousness, but is only a means to attain it.

This is my best sett of thoughts upon this subject; and though I have copied them all from the word of God, so far as I have been able to understand the meaning of it, yet some subtile disputer may arise and tell me, he could embarrass my scheme with so many objections, and press it with such powerful difficulties as are far above my skill to resolve, and so constrain me to renounce it.

If this disputer can shew me that any part of it is contrary to scripture, I renounce it freely; but though he might perplex it with difficulties which I could not easily answer, yet I would not merely for that reason be bound immediately to renounce it: For there are many texts of Scripture itself which are so perplexed by the cavelling wit of the Deists, or Socinians, that it may be exceeding hard to give a fair and satisfactory account of them; yet none of us, who are Christians, dare to renounce the Scripture, nor those texts that have so much darkness about them; because we have so much stronger proof of the truth of Scripture. How many difficulties are there in the chronological and historical parts, that seem scarce reconcilable by all  
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## II. § 2. The FORM of the GOSPEL. 49

the learning and reason of men; and perhaps that Spirit only can reconcile them who knows what were his own designs in writing, what the idea that the first writers fixed to each word, what the sense which they intended to convey to the first readers, and what accidental variations may have crept into the text by the ignorance or negligence, the bigotry or sacrilege of the transcribers. I have learnt from my youngest years of philosophy, not to renounce any proposition, for which I see plain and sufficient evidence from reason and revelation, though many difficulties may attend it which I am not at present able to solve. I know the weakness of human nature.

§ 3. Yet that I may make a clearer way for this discourse, to the assent of my readers, I would give a hint or two how the chief *objections* that I can think of, may be removed.

Object. I. Some may oppose me by Scripture, and say, among all the texts that call the Gospel a Law, there is one that makes our blessedness evidently to depend on our doing the work commanded therein. James i. 25. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." Now this looks like justification by obedience to the commands of the Gospel, which is the proper nature of a Law.

Ans. I. That the Gospel which hath advices, commands and threatnings belonging to it should be sometimes called a Law in Scripture is no wonder, for the word Law among the Jews, was in so frequent use upon all occasions, that not only doctrines, rules and constitutions were called Laws, but even the natural and supernatural principles of human actions. So "the Law of kindness," Prov. xxxi. 26 for good humour, or a principle of love and civility. So "the Law of sin," Rom. vii.



50 The FORM of the GOSPEL. II. § 2.

25. for the principles of corrupt nature and evil inclinations. So "the Law of the spirit of life" for a principle of holiness, Rom. viii. 2. And yet if all the places where some suppose the Gospel to be called a Law, were well examined, we should find them reduced to a very few: whence it will appear that this is not the common language of Scripture. The text cited in the objection seems rather to refer to the moral Law, which is called a "Law of liberty," because it is freed from its cursing and condemning power by the Gospel, and made easy to believers by their new nature: Now surely, no Christian will say that we are to be justified by doing the works of the moral Law.

Ans. II. In those places of the New Testament where the Gospel is called a Law, there is generally some qualifying word added, as, "the Law of faith, the Law of liberty," &c. that it may seem to stand in opposition to a "Law of Works," and appear distinct from a proper Law.

Ans. III. There may be many blessings promised, and blessedness pronounced upon obedience to any of the commands of God, whether in the moral Law or Gospel; so Psalm i. 1. and cxix. 1, 2. so Matth. v. 3.—11. But every such blessing doth not signify the justification of a sinner in the sight of God, his release from the guilt or obligation to hell, and his first right to heaven. He that obeys the duties of the Law or Gospel in any measure or degree, has some sort of blessedness pronounced on him by the favour of God, for *in keeping any of his commands there is great reward*, Psalm xix. 11. especially to a soul in a state of grace, and already justified by faith.

Object. II. Another may draw an argument from reason, and say, whatsoever duties of righteousness are required in any Covenant, the fulfilling those duties must in the very nature of things be esteemed ..

## II. § 2. The FORM of the G O S P E L. 51

esteemed that *righteousness* upon which that constitution pronounces a man just or right in court ; so Faith justifies us against the charge of unbelief, so repentance and sincere obedience justify us against the charge of impenitency and hypocrisy, and so perseverance justifies us against the charge of apostacy, because it is a conformity to that rule or constitution which requires Repentance, Faith, Perseverance, &c.

Ans. It must be granted indeed, that in the very nature of things our Faith justifies us against the charge of unbelief, so far as our Faith goes ; and our repentance and our love to God justify us against the charge of impenitence and hating God, so far as we do repent and love him ; and our meekness, humility and sincerity, justify us against the charge of pride, passion, and hypocrisy, so far as we are meek, humble and sincere : And in this sense the Apostle John might say, John iii. 7. “ He that doth righteousness is righteous, as God is righteous,” (where *righteousness* is evidently used for *Holiness*, and not, to signify *Justification*.) But all our virtues and graces of Faith, Love, Repentance, &c. are so very far from perfection, and so much below what the holiness of God and his commands require, that the Spirit of God in his word, hath not thought fit to honour these our works with the name of *righteousness*, when he is describing the way how a sinner is justified ; nor hath he applied the term *Justification* to these performances in those places of Scripture where with a plain design and exactness of expression he hath treated of the righteousness that justifies a sinner before God. And the holy Apostle seems cautious of using the word *Justification*, when he is speaking of his own obedience, 1 Cor. iv. 4. “ I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified ;” though this justification refers only to the charge of negligence in the discharge of his Apostolical office.

Object.

52 The FORM of the G O S P E L. II. § 2.

Object. III. Yet it is evident that there are several texts which speak of our Justification by works, as James ii. our justification by our words, Matth. xii. 37. and our right to heaven by doing the commands, Rev. xxii. 14. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life," &c.

Ans. In those places of Scripture where the word *Justification* is used and attributed to our duties or graces, we must consider in what sense *Justification* is taken.

1. There is a *Justification before men*, and a *Justification in our own consciences*; and in both these respects our repentance, our love to God, our good works, all justify us against the charges of wicked men, and against the charges of Satan's temptations, or our own doubting consciences, i. e. our repentance shews we are not impenitent, and our good works shew that we are not full of wicked works; and good works may be said to justify us also against the charge of a false and dead faith, for they prove that our faith is lively and true; and this is that justification St. James intends, chap. ii. for ver. 18. he says, "I will shew thee my faith by my works;" and it is in this sense that he speaks of *justification by works*. So Abraham was justified from the charge of a dead faith, by his zeal for God in offering up his son, Jam. ii. 21, 23. "Thus was the scripture fulfilled," i. e. thus was the truth and honour of the Scripture maintained, which declares Abraham to be justified by faith. Now though this act of Abraham's faith here mentioned, and Gen. xv. 6. exercised on the express promise of the Messiah, be not the first act of faith that ever he put forth, and though he might be in a justified state long before, yet every repeated act of true faith confirms the justifying sentence, and shews the way of his first justification: And so every

every good work he performed may be said in another sense to confirm his justification too, as it proves the truth of his faith, and evidences him to be justified.

2. There is a "justification at the day of judgment," which is only declarative, and designed to publish and declare to all the world the equitableness of God's final sentence, adjudging some to heaven and some to hell: and there our own holiness, imperfect as it is, may justify us against the charge of being wicked; what good words we have spoken may justify us against the charge of being always guilty of evil or idle words: they serve to distinguish the character of saints and sinners, and to make it appear there is a difference in their practice, as well as in their recompences, as the process of that awful day is represented, Matth. xxv. and it is in this sense that our Saviour saith concerning the day of judgment, Matth. xii. 37. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned;" that is, your words as well as your actions shall have a share in determining your character before men and angels in that day. And that text also in the Rev. xii. 12, 14. refers evidently to the last judgment, where it is said, "behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be; blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." The sense of it is, that those who persevere to the end; in a sincere obedience to the commands of Christ, in all the duties of holiness, shall have a public, adjudged and declared right to the immediate possession of heaven; which is a very different thing from the justification of a sinner in the sight of God, by his believing or trusting in Christ, which gives him the first right; and which is the



54      The FORM of the GOSPEL.      II. § 2.  
subject of St. Paul's discourse, Rom. chap. ii.  
iii. iv. and v. and Gal. chap. ii. and iii.

It is on this matter that our divines are wont to make a distinction between the *right of heirship* which a son has to his father's estate as soon as he is born, (supposing his father to be dead) and the *right of fitness*, and a right to the immediate possession, and this he has not till the age of manhood. Nor is this distinction ill-framed, nor unaptly applied to the present case; for Scripture gives a plain foundation for it, viz. that we have the right of *heirship* at our first believing, and the right of actual fitness, when we have fulfilled all the services God hath appointed us in this life. The Scriptures that naturally lead to this distinction are these: right of *heirship* by faith is very plain, Rom. iv. 11, 13, 16. Gal. iii. 26, 29. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Nor doth the Apostle make much distinction between our right to heaven by justification, and that by adoption or inheritance, for both justification and adoption come by faith; and he intermingles both, as they most fitly answer his present design; which is evident by comparing the process of his discourse from Rom. iv. 1—16. and Rom. v. 17, 18, 21.) And then there is the right of fitness for immediate possession, Heb. x. 36. "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise;" and this is the right intended, Rev. xxii. 14. Now we may suppose both the *right of heirship* and of *fitness* to be joined in that text, Heb. vi. 12. "Who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Through faith they are made heirs at first, and through continuance in faith and patience they are become actual inheritors. Nor is that text in Rom. x. 10. much unlike, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness,

## II. § 2. The FORM of the GOSPEL. 55

ousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Here justification is attributed to faith, and salvation to the outward profession of christianity, including all the proper effects and evidences of faith in a holy life. And tho' *salvation* in many places of Scripture is put for *justification*, because justification is salvation begun, yet when they are more accurately distinguished, the one is attributed to faith, the other to works, or to faith and works together.

Now, whatever other sorts of *justification* may be mentioned in Scripture, yet this *justification* of a sinner through faith requires such a righteousness as must secure us from all the penalties of all the guilt of every sin both original and actual, from all the charges of God's most holy and broken law, from all the charges of the imperfection of our Repentance, Faith, and our best works, and must set a sinner right and make him righteous, and give him a right to life in the court of that God who justified "Abraham and David without works, by imputing righteousness" to them, and continues under the Gospel the same way to *justify the ungodly*, Rom. iv. 5, 6. i. e. all that we do in a way of duty, is not respected in this court, but we are looked upon as ungodly, and without all righteousness in ourselves, and as such have a righteousness, or a right to life bestowed on us, or are justified of mere grace

And tho' here and there, for wise purposes, an expression may be dropt occasionally in Scripture, that may favour another way of speaking, yet in the descriptions of the Gospel, the way of a sinner's justification in the sight of God at his conversion, is never put upon fulfilling of the Gospel-duties, as the matter of his justifying righteousness; and therefore the Gospel is not a proper Law: and whatsoever forms of speech some persons may fancy agreeable to the nature and reason

of things, yet this which I have described is the most common way wherein the penmen of Scripture represent those things, when they seem to aim at an accurate and distinct description of the Law and Gospel: now scripture is our surest rule of speaking in matters of pure revelation.

To sum up all in short: the word Law is taken in various senses in the Bible: in some places it means inward principles of action, as the *Law of sin*; sometimes it signifies only directions and rules of life, as Prov. xiii. 14. *the law of the wise*, i. e. rule of wisdom. In other places it includes all the orders and injunctions that relate to one subject: as *the law of the Nazarite*, Numb. vi 13. "*the Law of the burnt-offering*," Lev. vi. 9. Sometimes it is taken in so large a latitude as to take in all doctrines, counsels and advices, commands, promises, threatnings, including prophecies, histories and examples also; so the Law frequently signifies all the five books of Moses. And in these senses the Gospel in its largest signification has several laws belonging to it, and itself may be called a law. The Scripture indulges a sparing use of it in such a sense. But the word Law in its most proper and strict sense signifies a constitution where duties are required, which if neglected, subject the offender to a penalty, and if performed, they are his justifying righteousness; and in this sense Scripture doth not at all favour the application of this name to the Gospel: for it is abundantly evident, that the words Law and Gospel taken in their most proper and limited senses, are constantly distinguished from each other, and set in direct opposition in the New Testament.

Thus have I thrown into some order those few, plain, reconciling thoughts between the contending parties of christians, and am already almost in pain to think that I shall a little displease all parties, because all these thoughts will hardly square  
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## II. § 4. The FORM of the GOSPEL. 57

and adjust themselves exactly to any of the popular and settled *schemes of Orthodoxy*; or at least, they will never agree with the extremes on either hand: yet if they appear to be drawn merely from the Scripture, and to speak the language of the holy writers, then this discourse will approve itself to those who maintain the most sacred regard to the Bible; and those schemes should be a little moulded and bent, to adjust them to the language of Scripture, even when it uses different forms of speech. But I shall not enter farther into this controversy, because my design is to soften the angry tempers of men, that they may not rage against each other when they use different forms of speaking, as the scripture itself does, and make an apology for both sides, while they agree in the things that are most substantial and necessary.

### S E C T. IV.

Now that I may proceed in this reconciling work, I shall follow this method.

I. Represent the *different apprehensions and different language of men in preaching the Gospel*.

II. Mention some of the *causes or occasions of these different apprehensions*.

III. Give a hint or two of the *conveniencies and inconveniencies of each of these ways of preaching*.

IV. Shew the *safety and sufficiency of each, with regard to salvation*.

V. Conclude with a word or two of *request or humble advice*.

First, let me represent the *various apprehensions of men in those matters*: but here I would be understood to describe only the moderate men among those who are called Calvinists, and those that are named Methodists; as for the high-flyers, or extreme and rigid party-men of either side, I leave them out in my present account, while I mention the little differences among the men of moderation,



among whom I reckon far the greatest part of the Protestant Dissenters in England, to be at this time, and I hope I am not mistaken in this opinion.

Some when they read or pronounce the words Law or Gospel, take them generally in their loosest and largest sense, and so they unite their names, and make them consistent together; others are ready to take those words in their limited and proper sense, and then they divide them into very distinct things, and will not allow their names so promiscuous a use.

Some Ministers love to explain the Gospel in a more *legal* way, and describe it as a *conditional Covenant* that requires agreements and stipulations from men; they insist much on vowing and resolving to submit to the commands of Christ, and with a lively zeal and powerful eloquence, they enforce the duties of repentance, sincere obedience, watchfulness and perseverance; and shew how much the promises of life, heaven and glory, peace and daily pardon depend on these qualifications and performances, pronouncing the terrible threatenings of damnation on the impenitent, the unbelieving, and the disobedient, to awaken the secure sinner, and stir up the slothful christian. -Others delight more in representing the Gospel as a *declaration of grace and free promise* of salvation to sinners; a promise of pardoning mercy, sanctifying grace, and everlasting glory to sinful and perishing criminals, and invite sinners to receive all this grace, to accept of this salvation, and to trust in this Saviour, according to the offers of the Gospel: when its truths are revealed, the first sort chuse to say, that the moral Law in the hand of Christ, commands us to believe them; when its duties are mentioned, they rather say, the law of nature in the hand of Christ requires obedience to them; and that while the Gospel in its proper language promises salvation

tion to believers, the moral law, binds condemnation on the unbeliever, and the impenitent; but the pure Gospel is all grace and mercy: and they preach the Law of works in the perfection of its demands and terror of its penalties, to drive sinners for refuge to the Gospel: And they press the duties of holiness on their hearers from a comfortable sense of their deliverance from hell, and from gratitude to Christ, as evidences of their faith, as preparatives for heaven, and as necessary, both in the nature of things, and by divine appointment in order to our final happiness.

Those that follow the *conditional* way of preaching the Gospel, describe the chief act of faith, as a *consent of will* to submit themselves to him in all his offices; a consent to take him for their Prophet, and resolution to make all his instructions their rule and guide; a consent to take him for their Priest, to make their peace with God, and obtain their pardon; a consent to own him for their King, and promise sincere obedience to him as their Lord in all his commands; but still with an humble dependance on his spirit and grace, to enable them to fulfil these resolutions.

Those that preach the Gospel in its more free and *absolut* form describe faith in Christ as the flight of a poor, guilty, perishing sinner to an only refuge; and they make its chief act to consist in a trusting or committing the soul, ignorant, guilty, and sinful as it is, into the hand of Christ, with a sincere desire to have it enlightened by him as their Prophet, pardoned and reconciled to God through him as their Priest, and subdued to all willing obedience to him, and by him, as their Lord and King: humbly expecting that he will do all this for them; and this is in their opinion the best way of addressing themselves to poor sinners, who find themselves so dark, so sinful, so feeble and inconstant

stant in their best obedience and purposes, that they dare not resolve upon any thing and can hardly say, they heartily vow and promise a submission to Christ in all things; but that they can better apply to him in a way of trust and dependance, humbly desiring and hoping he will work all this in them by his grace, while they wait upon him in his appointed means.

The one are ever persuading their hearers to bind their souls to God, by solemn vows and covenants, even in particular duties, believing this to be the most effectual way to guard against every sin, and best secure their obedience and constancy under every temptation: The other are afraid to urge so much vowing and resolving on the consciences of men, lest they thereby lead them into a spirit of bondage, and lest their consciences be more troublesomely entangled and ensnared after every broken vow, and their faith and hope be too much discouraged; that faith and hope which ought to be the constant springs of their obedience. They advise their people, therefore, rather to commit their souls afresh continually to the care of Christ, as 2 Tim. i. to believe he accepts them, and to walk watchfully, without any particular, formal, and explicit vows. Though it must be confessed, that with regard to Christians of different tempers, both these methods have had very good success.

Some are sons of thunder, Boanerges, and frighten the profane out of their security, by many terrors that are written against those who obey not the Gospel; and they enforce obedience on the consciences of believers, chiefly by way of rewards and punishments: The other are like Barnabas's, sons of consolation, and persuade sinners to accept of the offered grace, by all the allurements of the compassion of God, and by the dying love of a Redeemer, beseeching them to be reconciled: And  
they

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they draw out the hearts of believers to repentance, and lead them with the spirit of power and love to an easy and conatural obedience, by the constraints of the love of Christ, and by a humble persuasion of their acceptance in him unto eternal life.

In short, the one dwell most upon the duties of the Gospel in their sermons, in order to qualify their hearers for the privileges; the other insist most on the privileges and comforts of the gospel, in order to invite and allure them to fulfil the duties, and to give their hearers strength and delight in the discharge of these duties.

I would not here be understood, as though I supposed either of those ministers never to mingle mercy and terror, precepts, penalties, and promises; for it must be acknowledged, there are some persons of each opinion, in whom all the talents of a preacher happily unite, and they honourably sustain both characters, the *sons of thunder*, and the *sons of consolation*; and all of them make conscience of publishing to men both divine grace and their duty, all of them preach repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; but those who have chosen one scheme of divinity for their own, more generally bend their ministry the one way, and those who have chosen the other, preach more usually in the other way.

All our Protestant confessions of faith, and I would persuade myself that our ministers, at least among the Nonconformists, agree that, though duties are required to be performed by us, yet the grace that is necessary to perform them is given freely to us; that though repentance, faith, and sincere obedience, are indispensably necessary, in order to our final salvation, yet they are not the justifying righteousness upon account of which our sins are pardoned, and eternal life is bestowed upon us: That the obedience and death, and intercession  
of



of Christ, as a proper High-Priest and Sacrifice, are the only foundation of our acceptance with God, and ground of all our hopes; and that from him, as a head of influence, we must receive all grace, whereby we are conducted safe to glory.

Both sides agree that we are to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*, but that it is *GOD who worketh in us to will and to do*, Phil. ii. 12, 13. That *we are saved by the faith of the Son of God, and not by works, lest any should boast*; yet that we must also be *created in Christ Jesus unto good works*, for God hath appointed that *we should walk in them*, Eph. ii. 8, 9, 10.

II. In the next place, that I may make a little further apology for those that are humble, honest, and sincere on both sides, I would consider the various *causes or occasions*, whence different apprehensions of men about these things may arise: And here we shall find poor frail mankind, almost universally born and brought up in prejudices, to some party or other, incompassed with a thousand things that tend to influence the judgment, and incline it insensibly toward some particular opinion; so that a whole scheme of doctrines built upon a pure, zealous, and laborious search after truth, without any manner of bias or corruption on any side, is scarce to be found in human nature. There is no man alive free from these weaknesses. Happy the mind that has the fewest of them.

It may be these ministers themselves, who differ in opinion, are of very different natural tempers, and this hath a secret influence in swaying their mind, their studies, their judgment, and ministry, one way or the other; though all those who agree in natural temper, are not always of the same opinion.

Or it may be, they had an education under teachers and tutors of different sentiments, or have met

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met with books of different principles and opinions, which have made a strong and lasting impression upon their minds, and engaged them sometimes into one party, before they had strength of judgment to determine their opinions upon just arguments.

Some persons in order to settle their judgments in these points, have studied more and prayed less, and some have prayed more and studied too little; and some on both sides have studied hard, and prayed much, and sought earnestly the instructions of the blessed Spirit, and yet have fallen into different ways of thinking in those parts of Christianity which are not of necessity to salvation, and have been suffered to follow different forms of speech for wise purposes in the providence of God.

Some little accident or occurrence of life, or some sudden start of thought, while the balance of the judgment was in suspense, has perhaps given it a turn to one side or the other, and perhaps determined it for their whole lives.

Some have happened to form their set of doctrines at first more by their own reasoning powers, and drawn their schemes of religion from what they imagine the most natural connection, the necessity or congruity of things, and they call the Bible only to their assistance, and seek proper texts to confirm their own system: Others draw the whole scheme of doctrines from a constant application to the holy scripture, and call in reason to their assistance, only in order to understand and methodize those doctrines: And though the first way of study in matters of the Christian religion, is by no means to be justified, yet too many have unhappily practised it; and though the latter way is much to be preferred, and most likely to come near the truth, yet it is not followed by all who preach the Gospel; and no wonder then that ministers may differ in their thoughts. Such

Such is the weakness of human nature, that as some of us form and build up our first opinions upon very slight and insufficient grounds, and there are many who persist in them, and strongly maintain them without an honest examination, so others of us change our opinions upon reasons as slight and feeble and insufficient. Some persons having been perplexed with one or two great difficulties in that scheme of sentiments which they have professed, and being unable to grapple with them, have by swift or slow degrees, abandoned that whole scheme, and fell in with another, which perhaps hath equal or greater difficulties in it; never considering that the whole system of Christianity, with all its appendices, is so vast, and our view of things is so narrow, and our knowledge so imperfect, that a sharp disputant may push some parts of all our human schemes into great perplexities, even such as human reason can hardly solve; and perhaps God alone knows how to reconcile them, in whose single view all things lie for ever fair and open, perfectly consistent, and are comprehended at once.

Or it may be the *way* and *method* of *divine grace* in the *first conversion* of the one and the other was very different. Some were wrought upon at first more by the terrors of the law of God, and they find them still to have the greatest and most powerful influence on their consciences; others from their wild wanderings were brought home to Christ by gentle discoveries of divine love in the death of a Saviour: Some, like the jailor, Acts xvi. 26—30, have had their consciences shaken as with an earthquake, they “came in trembling and crying out, What must I do to be saved?” Others had their hearts *softly opened*, as was the heart of Lydia, 14th verse of the same chapter, and they received the word of grace and the gospel; and they

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they find the work of God carried on upon their own souls, still by the most evangelical methods. Now a man's own early experiences in the things of religion, will naturally have a great influence on his opinions; and God in his infinite wisdom hath ordered it should be so, that persons of every sort and temper, and humour, young and old, sinners and saints, under every kind of temptation, might meet with some ministers of the Gospel, and some sermons and writings to suit their taste, to hit their case, and be the most effectual means of their salvation.

The third thing I proposed here was to shew briefly, that as *each of these ways of preaching have their several advantages*, so each of them have their *special inconveniencies* too, if they are perpetually and only insisted on, unless well managed by the extraordinary prudence of the preacher.

The one aims most at the glory of divine equity, in rewards and punishments, and contends much for the sincerity of God in all his transactions with men: The other seems to look most at honouring the riches and freedom of divine grace, and God's infinite condescension and compassion to sinful creatures.

One seems to lead Christians more to a strict scrupulosity in every action, in order to make up the undoubted evidences of a Gospel-perfection, which they call *sincerity*, and thereby to raise their hopes of escaping hell and obtaining heaven; it drives the soul to duties, and maintains a trembling watchfulness; but is in danger of governing it by a spirit of bondage, and of keeping our faith and comfort very low. The other leads to equal holiness, or perhaps to higher degrees of it, by the delightful constraints of a filial love, by the sweet influences of divine consolation; but there may be some danger of encouraging negligence and presumption,



sumption, and that not only in sinners, but even sometimes in believers themselves, if not wisely managed and guarded.

Upon this subject I might here give my pen into the hand of some sprightly advocate of each party, and have forty more pages written for me speedily, without any thought or labour of mine; this would swell my Essay up finely, and enlarge it to a volume, with many a name of Arminian and Antinomian dealt about freely on the opposite opinions: For the supposed advantages and disadvantages on both sides, are frequently mentioned as arguments of each party against the other; but I shall not think necessary to insist longer on them here for that very reason: And though these sort of moral arguments drawn from the design and tendency of things, may be justly used on both sides, and on both sides have some degree of truth and force in them, yet both may not have equal force: Nor do I think it inconsistent with my design in this reconciling discourse, to declare my own sentiments: "For a man may be very happy in making peace between two quarreling neighbours, though he is well persuaded that one hath the better side of the cause, and in a friendly manner expresseth it too."

I will not be ashamed then to declare, that in my opinion, one method of preaching the Gospel hath greater advantages in it, and fewer inconveniences than the other; supposing still that we guard against extremes: that one seems more connatural to the genius of the Gospel, as it is distinct from a covenant of works, and seems to suit better with the most glorious designs of divine grace. My own experience in the things of religion, my observations of some others, and my diligent search of the holy Scriptures, hath led my thoughts rather to favour and practice the more  
evangelical

evangelical method of preaching most frequently: But another person who follows a different way may tell me, he came by his turn of thoughts the same way as I did by mine, and my charity demands that I believe it. Yet while both sides maintain those great truths, wherein I mentioned the general agreement of our Protestant confessions of faith, I cannot conceive that either of them can lead sinners astray from salvation.

And that is the fourth proposal I made, viz. to shew the real *safety* of each of these methods in ministering the Gospel both to saints and sinners, and that it is evident, because they agree in the most necessary and essential parts of it. Both of them preach grace and duty, justification by Christ, and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and teach men all that is of necessity to be believed and practised in order to salvation.

If two men sitting under a different ministry are brought sincerely to repent of all sin, and to love God with all their heart, can I imagine that one shall be damned, because he tells me he repents in obedience to the commands of the Gospel? Or the other, because he doth it in obedience to the moral law in the hand of Christ, supposing the pure Gospel to have no command in it? If two sinners are persuaded to accept of Christ Jesus for their Lord and Saviour, can I ever believe, that God will condemn one of them, because he first resolved to obey Christ as his Lord, and thereby took encouragement to trust in him as a Saviour? Or that God will punish the other for ever, because he first trusted in Christ as a Saviour, and thereby found his will sweetly inclined to submit to him as his Lord? Where all duties required in the Gospel are sincerely performed, can I ever be persuaded men shall be sent to hell, merely because they do not agree about the relations that  
these

these duties have to one another, or to their salvation, while both agree to lay the Lord Jesus Christ, and his righteousness, or his obedience unto death, as the only foundation of all their hopes?

If either of these ways of preaching the Gospel were so contrary to Scripture, and such abominable errors in the sight of God as angry men of both sides represent them, I cannot persuade myself that God would so far have favoured both, in these instances following, viz.

I. If either of these ways of preaching were so dangerous as some have supposed, I cannot think the Spirit of God would have used those expressions in Scripture, which sometimes seem to represent the covenant of grace in one form and sometimes in another; nor that he would have suffered the penmen of his holy word to have given occasion to such different sentiments on this subject among his holy worshippers, and those who have sought his directions and his grace with much importunity and perseverance.

II. If either of these ways of preaching were so dangerous as some have imagined, I cannot believe that the blessed God would ever have attended both ways of preaching with his blessing, so far as to convert great numbers of sinners by them, and edify his saints; but it is sufficiently evident that ministers of very different apprehensions in these points have been owned and blessed of God to the conversion, comfort, and salvation of many souls.

III. If either of these representations of the Gospel were so very dangerous, I cannot imagine, that persons of good understanding, of deep learning, of large knowledge in religion, of long experience, and of great holiness, should maintain their opinions in these things so very different to their lives end, if their salvation were in such extreme

treme hazard thereby, however in the infancy of their Christianity they might have received and embraced these different apprehensions. Surely if the'e points had been of so dreadful importance on either side, God would have granted a greater union in sentiment to so great a number of his children, who laboured in sincere enquiry after truth, constant and fervent prayer for the teaching of the blessed Spirit, and were truly zealous for his honour. Divine goodness surely would not have suffered such multitudes of holy souls on either side to continue always in mistakes of so terrible consequence as some disputers have represented them.

# S E C T. V.

May I be permitted at the end of this discourse to drop a word or two of humble request to all, but especially to my younger brethren in the ministry.

I. Request. Pay a constant and sacred reverence to the language of Scripture, and let it appear in these following instances.

1st. Let the forms of speech that are used in those Scriptures where the doctrines of the Gospel are expressly laid down and proved, be the speech in which you commonly teach those doctrines; and let the language wherein pathetical exhortations are given in Scripture, be the language which you generally imitate in your affectionate addresses to the consciences of saints and sinners; the one as well as the other are given for our example. Whereas if we should preach and explain the deepest truths in all the affectionate forms and flourishes of speech and metaphor, it is the way to lead the judgments of our hearers astray; but while we submit ourselves to the words which the Holy Spirit useth as our pattern, both in teaching, and  
also



also in exhorting, we may humbly expect his inward teachings to enlighten our own understanding, and make our labours in the Gospel powerful to the salvation of them that hear us.

2dly, Let those words which are not used in Scripture never be zealously maintained and insisted on as necessary to salvation, and especially where they give offence: nor let those terms and ways of expression which Scripture useth but very seldom, and upon particular occasions, be the perpetual or constant language of your ministry, in opposition to those expressions and ways of representation which Scripture most frequently delights to use; and let no authentic systems of divinity, to which you are most inclined, nor the names of great men ever prevail with you to break this rule.

3dly, Dare not indulge yourself in a disgust to any Scripture language, or an aversion to those Scriptures which seem to run in a stile and expression different from the language which you generally chuse; for even those expressions were designed for useful purposes by the Holy Spirit, and doubtless have attained some happy end in the providence of God, in particular cases: if you should once encourage such a vicious humour, it might proceed so far at last, as to render a great part of the Bible the object of your disgust. Be sure therefore always to maintain such a reverential tenderness for the Holy Scripture, that you may never dare to rail against any expressions that Scripture useth, nor oppose them, without a modest distinction in what sense they are proper, and in what sense they are to be avoided. And this leads me to the *second request*.

II. Request. When you hear any ministers, in preaching the Gospel, use the words *free and absolute, conditional, unconditional, promises, laws, threatenings, commands, &c.* Exercise so much charity as to believe they use them in such a sense as the Scripture approves

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*approves of, and as secures the salvation of men, according to their sincerest apprehensions.*

If the preacher speaks of the Gospel, as a free and absolute promise, always suppose he intends also, that all the duties of repentance and holiness are necessary, in order to salvation, tho' he does not like to call them conditions. If another should insist much on conditions in the Gospel, suppose he means none of them to be performed merely by your own strength, nor to include any thing of *merit* in them. If he speak of the laws of Christ, understand him concerning all those rules and directions which Christ hath given to his followers, but not in the perfect notion of a law. Even if he calls the Gospel a law, believe that he intends it only in the largest sense, and doth not mean that we are justified in the sight of God, by our performance of the duties of this law as the proper matter of our righteousness before God: or if he should happen to mention any such thing as justification by our good works, &c. take due heed to the connexion, and let charity persuade you that he is speaking concerning *justification before men, or justification in our own consciences, or in the Day of Judgment*, and not of a sinner's justifying righteousness in the sight of God, when he is first converted and accepted of him thro' faith in Jesus Christ.

Suffer not your anger immediately to be kindled at the sound of any of these words, as tho' they were at once undermining and perverting the Gospel of Christ. Nor ever give yourself leave to reproach ministers, as no preachers of the Gospel, merely because they chuse other modes of expression than those which you most esteem, and frequently use; for such a conduct will warp and bind down the consciences of men to an uncharitable partiality. This will render every sermon offensive to them that is not conceived just in their beloved

loved language, and it will utterly prevent their profit by the various gifts Christ has bestowed on his Ministers. There are some common christians in our age, who are most unhappy instances of this unchristian temper; and it is to these persons chiefly, that I give this *second advice*.

III. Request. *Avoid all the high flights and extremes of zealous party men*, and which way of preaching soever you approve and pursue, be sure to guard against all extremes, both of notion and language. Let the hopes of exalting divine grace never persuade you to neglect to enforce the duties of the Gospel, and to press them with zeal on the consciences of all men: nor let the fear of encouraging licentiousness ever tempt you to turn the Gospel into a covenant of works: for God in his Gospel hath sufficiently provided for the honour of his holiness, and the sanctification of his own children.

You will tell me, that Scripture itself useth expressions as high upon particular occasions, and as much leaning to extremes as men of party among us. But remember then, that the Scripture uses such strong expressions not on one side only, but on both sides, and infinite wisdom hath done this more forcibly to impress some present truth or duty; but while it is evident the holy writers have used high expressions, strong figures of speech, and vehement turns on both sides, this sufficiently instructs us that we should be moderate in our censures of either side, and that the calm doctrinal truth, stripped of all rhetoric and figures, lies nearer to the middle, or at least that some of these appearing extremes, are more reconcilable than angry men will generally allow. If the Apostle charges the Corinthians, "so run that ye may obtain," 1 Cor. ix. 24. and tells the Romans, "it is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of God who sheweth mercy," Rom. ix. 16. we may plainly infer that our running and his mercy,

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mercy, our diligence and divine grace, are both necessary to our salvation.

IV. Request. Let the particular tempers, temptations and dangers of persons with whom you converse, or to whom you preach, together with the growing errors of the times, have always some weight with you, to bend your ministry a little more the one way or the other : And never affect to preach these matters in a controversial way, but rather in a plain and practical form, except the temptations of the age and nation, or of particular churches or christians seem to demand it. And indeed this seems to be one great reason, why Scripture itself in different parts of it sometimes manages the argument in a way of dispute, and at other times gives a different practical turn to the same truth, and uses so different language in the representation of the same doctrines. For the several books of Scripture were written according to the various necessities of the church of God, and to obviate temptations of contrary kinds, and to prevent the danger of errors arising, by running to extremes on either side.

In the last age, in the time of the civil wars Antinomianism and errors of that nature, were very common in the nation : This turned the labours and study of many pious men to vindicate and preach up the duties of the Gospel, and works of holiness, as the proper business of the day. In this present age, the Popish and Pelagian doctrines of justification by works, and salvation by the power of our own free-will, are publicly maintained and preached thro' the land : The Socinian errors are revived and spread exceedingly, whereby Jesus Christ is robbed of his God-head, or his satisfaction, or both, and the blessed Spirit denied in the glory of his offices : And Deism in opposition to Christianity, daily prevails.

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Now, perhaps, some may think it the duty and business of the day to temporize, and by preaching the Gospel a little more conformably to *Natural Religion*, in a mere rational form, to bring it down as near as may be to their scheme, that we may gain them to hear and approve of it, or at least, that we may not offend them. But I am rather of opinion, that we should in such a day stand up for the defence of the Gospel in the full glory of its most important doctrines, and in the full freedom of its grace; that we should preach it in its divinest and most evangelical form, that the cross of Christ, by the promised power of the Spirit, may vanquish the vain reasonings of men, and that this despised doctrine triumphing in the conversion of souls, may confound the wise and the mighty, and silence the disputers of this world. This was the bold and glorious method St. Paul took at Corinth, where learning, reason and philosophy flourished in pride; but they yielded several trophies of victory to the preaching of the cross. Paul could use the *wisdom of words* whensoever he had occasion for it, and had the *excellency of speech* at command when he pleased: this appears in several parts of his writings; yet in his sermons at Corinth, he disclaimed it all, and “determined to know nothing among them but Christ, and him crucified,” 1 Cor. ii. 2.

Happy that man who hath attained the holy skill of joining promises and commands, duties and privileges, authority, terror and grace; and who mingles them all wisely in his ministry; who hath learnt of St. Paul the divine art of addressing himself to the reason, the consciences, and the passions of men in such variety of expressions, of power, terror and love, as may most effectually answer the end of his office. Happy is he that knows how to display the Gospel in all forms under which Scripture represents it, to preach to  
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the Jews, and to teach the Gentiles; to talk to the righteous and the wicked in proper language, to the obstinate rebel, to the trembling sinner, and to the mourning saint. Happy is he that "becomes all to all that he may gain the more souls, 1 Cor. ix. 19, &c. sometimes as "without the law, yet under a law to Christ; sometimes as with the law, yet free from the bondage of it; that never strives about words to no profit, but knows how to divide the word of truth aright, and to give every one their portion: This is the workman that needs not to be ashamed," and hath most reason to hope for success. 2 Tim. ii. 14, 15.

To conclude. Let us all apply ourselves with unbiaſſed minds, with new diligence and fervent prayers, to search the word of God, and draw all our notions of the Gospel thence: Let us enquire into the spiritual ſtate, the dangers and neceſſities of the people to whom we miniſter, and this will be of great uſe to guide us to proper ſubjects and methods of diſcourſe.

Let our converſation be ſuch, as becomes the Gospel in every form of it, whether abſolute or conditional. Let our cloſe walking with God be exemplary and inſtructive, that men may ſee our religion as well as hear it, and all may confeſs, that while we preach the Gospel, we are zealous obſervers of the Law. Let us maintain upon our own hearts a ſweet and honourable ſenſe of the riches of free grace in Chriſt, together with a tender ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and a lively delight in holineſs, that the daily experience of our own ſouls, and our inward Chriſtianity which is taught us, and wrought in us by the Spirit of God, may inſtruct us how to preach to others.

Let that Gospel which is *written in the fleſhly tables of our hearts*, i. e. in our very ſouls, *by the finger of God*, be manifeſted in every part of our miniſtration for the good of men. Thus we ſhall

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obtain the approbation of Jesus our Judge, in  
preaching his Gospel of faith and love, and thus  
shall we have the pleasure of this testimony in our  
own consciences, that in the general course of our  
ministry we have sought to save the souls of others  
in the same way as we ourselves have sought to be  
saved: And that we have proposed the same truths  
to them, and recommended the same duties, which  
we ourselves believe and practise, in order to our  
own salvation. Amen.

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### E S S A Y III.

The true Use of the MORAL LAW under the  
GOSPEL.

MATT. xix. 17.

*If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

#### S E C T. I.

**H**ERE it will be necessary to run over the  
short conference between Christ and this  
young man, which is recorded by several of the  
Evangelists, because it will give us a plainer ac-  
count how these words are introduced, and lead us  
into the knowledge of the true design of them.

Ver. 16. And behold one came and said unto him,  
Good master, What good thing shall I do that I  
may have eternal life? 17. And he said unto him,  
Why callest thou me good? There is none good  
but one, that is God. But if thou wilt enter into  
life; keep the commandments. 18. He saith unto  
him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no mur-  
der, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt  
not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness. 19.  
Honour thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt  
love thy neighbour as thyself. 20. The young  
man

man saith unto him, All these have I kept from my youth up : what lack I yet ? 21. Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come and follow me. 22. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. 23. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The person who addressed the Lord Jesus Christ here, was a young man, and wealthy, as this sacred writer informs us ; and that he was a ruler among the Jews, Luke xviii. 18. That he was either a Pharisee, or at least one of the stricter sort of the Jews, seems evident, because he sought after eternal life, whereas the Sadducees denied a future state, many of the higher as well as the looser part of the nation disregarded it. He appears leavened with the common Pharasaical doctrine, viz. that the way to procure eternal life was by doing some good thing.

It is probable he had heard of the miracles and the fame of our blessed Lord, and believed him to be a teacher sent from God, for he comes in an humble manner as to a divine prophet, he seems to be in good earnest in the question which he puts to Christ, and seriously concerned about the welfare of his soul. He did not come with a design to ensnare Christ in his words, as that sort of men the Pharisees often did : Nor did he come with useless perplexing questions, as the Scribes and Sadducees and Lawyers sometimes had done : But, as St. Mark relates the history, he shewed some tokens of sincerity, Mark x. 17, for " he came running to Jesus " with diligence, longing to have the opinion of a new prophet about a matter of such importance, as the obtaining of eternal life :



“He kneeled down to him,” and paid our Saviour much civil respect: He received the directions of Christ with attention, and when he found in his heart that his love to his riches would not let him comply with the terms proposed, “he went away sorrowful.” There was something in his design and in his deportment that was amiable, and we find that our Saviour looked on him with a love of complacency, Mark x. 21. But he was not so zealous a lover of God to part with earth for heaven.

We may suppose this young gentleman might probably have one or more of these three designs in his question, viz.

I. Whereas the law of Moses promises long life in the land of Canaan, and the blessings of this world to those that are obedient to the statutes and ordinances which God enjoined to Israel; but it scarce ever mentions, plainly and expressly, any promises of eternal life in another world, nor the methods to attain it; and whereas this youth was fully convinced from the writings of the prophets, that there was a future state and eternal happiness in another world to be obtained, he comes now to Jesus, as a new and divine teacher, to seek an answer to this question about eternal life, which he could not find an express answer to in the law of Moses; and he would fain know whether he must obtain eternal life the same way that he was to seek for a long life on earth, and temporal blessings, namely, by an outward obedience to the laws already given to the Jews.

II. We may suppose him enquiring after some shorter and more compendious way to eternal life, by practising some one or two extraordinary instances of duty, and thereby to atone for the neglect of the rest. This was an error that prevailed among the Pharisees in our Saviour's time,

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as seems to be sufficiently evident from their doctrine, as it is represented, Matt. xv. 5, 6. *Who-so-ever shall make a great present to God and his temple (as some interpret the word Corban, or a gift) he shall be free from all relative duties to parents, &c.* So Matt. xxiii. 23, if they did but *pay tithes* duly to the priest they might be saved, tho' they *neglected the weighty matters of the law, justice, mercy, and the love of God.* So the Pharisee that went into the temple to pray, *he fasted twice a-week, and gave tithes of all that he possessed,* and he accounted himself righteous, Luke xviii. 12.

And upon this account you find the question proposed to our Saviour, Matt. xxii. 36, "Which is the great commandment of the law?" Some were for *circumcision*, as a most ancient precept, and therefore of the most general obligation: Some for the *sabbath*, because it was so strictly enjoined to the Jews: And some for *sacrifice*, as being in their opinion a sufficient expiation and atonement for any defects whatsoever. They thought one or other of these to be the critical points on which salvation depended.

And generally we find that the commands of God, of an external or ceremonial nature, or the mere inventions and traditions of men, were thus aggrandized by the teachers of the Jews, as though heaven might be obtained in a short way, by practising those formalities, without the long labours of watchfulness and abstinence from sin, and obedience to every moral command of the law. Yet we must suppose this person to be one of the better sort of them, for he had endeavoured to keep the moral law, (at least in the outward and visible duties of it) as well as ceremonial, even from his youth up, as he tells our Saviour.

III. Or we may suppose this young man hearing the fame of Christ, as the great prophet that was

to come into the world, might expect some new and unheard-of doctrines, some new and unknown way to heaven, which the law and the old prophets had never spoken of; especially since he thought he had already fulfilled all that they had required: And therefore he came running to Christ, kneeling down with earnest desire to be taught this new revelation, this method of obtaining heaven and eternal life, which the new prophet was sent to teach: And perhaps he might imagine Jesus to be the Messiah: And they knew that "when the Messiah came he would teach them all things," which all the former prophets and Moses himself had not fully acquainted them with, John iv. 25.

Or may we not suppose all these three designs together, to be in the heart of this young querist? As if he should say, "Good master, Moses, in his five books, hath spoken much of life, *long life* in the land of promise, but hath not given us an express account of *life eternal* in the other world, nor prescribed the special methods to attain it; I would therefore fain learn that of thee. And whereas the statutes and ceremonies, and commands and judgments, and duties of the law, are very numerous and difficult, is there no one good thing that may be as acceptable to God as all the rest, and give me a title to eternal happiness, in a short and compendious manner? Or is there any new way to heaven which thou discoverest to men? As thou seemest to preach up a future state, a heaven and a hell in the other world, dost thou come to give any new directions how to avoid this hell, and obtain this heaven?"

Our Lord, before he answered his question, takes occasion to ask him, *Why he called him good*, which was a title that eminently belonged to God only: The best conjecture that interpreters can make of this query is this, Jesus searched into his  
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opinion concerning himself, whether he knew or believed that he was the Messiah or the Son of God, who was *one with the Father*, and thereby had a right to divine titles and characters, and might justly be called *good* in a divine sense. Perhaps Jesus might have, before this time, manifested his *oneness with God*; but if he had not, yet there were several descriptions of the Messiah in the Old Testament, wherein the names and titles of the true God are given to the Messiah, which could not be given him without such a *oneness with God*, and therefore he might justly take occasion to catechise such a forward young man who seemed to be conceited of his own righteousness, &c. It is as if Jesus had said, "Thou callest me *good*: there is none originally, eternally, and perfectly good, but God himself; none good as God is; none hath right to the title in the most absolute and exalted sense of it but God: Why then dost thou use this salutation to me, and give me this title? Dost thou think any thing more than human dwells in me? Hast thou known or observed any of those speeches or those miracles of mine, where I have asserted and proved that *I am in the Father and the Father in me*, or, that *I am one with the Father*, and so partake with him in the title of *good*?" See John x. 30, 37, 38, and xiv. 8, 9, 10.

Here it may be remarked, that our Saviour did not use to publish his own divinity or oneness with God, in plain and express terms to the people, but generally by such methods of enquiry and insinuation. See Mark ii. 5—11, where he had forgiven the sins of a man that was sick of the palsy before he healed him; and then he proves by the miracle of healing, that he had a right to forgive sin, while the Jews acknowledge that none could forgive sins but God alone. So John x. 30—36, after he had given a hint of his Deity, by saying,



*I and my Father are one*, the Jews would have stoned him for pretending to be God; which he answers by such an enquiry; "Since those are called *Gods* in Scripture, to whom the word of God came, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemeth; because I said, I am the Son of God?" Such a sort of oblique insinuation, or enquiry concerning the divinity of his person, seems to be our Lord's design in this text. If this be not the purport and intention of this question, I must confess I am ignorant of the design of it.

Then he proceeds to give our young querist an answer to his question, "If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments."

The young man again seems to have his former designs in his eye, when he asks, *Which commandment he should keep?* As if he should say, "Is it any one particular commandment or commandments of Moses that I must keep? And if I have kept them, is there any new commandment thou wilt give me, whereby eternal life will be ensured to me?"

Our Lord replies, "Keep the common commandments of the Law, *Thou knowest them*, as Mark x. 17. It is not by observing any one command and neglecting the rest, but the way to enter into life is obedience to all the old commandments, for *I am not come to break or dissolve the law of God, but to confirm or fulfil it*," Matt. v. 17, 19. And though our Lord Jesus mentions only those of the second table, and the duties towards men, yet we must suppose he means inclusively all the rest; for he saith in Matt. v. 19. "Whosoever shall teach men to break the least of the commandments of the law, shall be the least in the kingdom of heaven," i. e. shall have no place there. Our Saviour doth not give a dispensation

pen-sation to neglect duties toward God, by mentioning only the duties toward our neighbour; but the reason why he mentions them seem chiefly these two.

1. Because these duties to their neighbours were those which the Pharisees, who boasted of their own righteousness, more particularly neglected, while they pretended to much devotion and worship of God in all the forms of his appointment: And therefore our Lord insists particularly upon these commands that relate to our fellow creatures, to shew him that these were as necessary a part of his duty as all the more pompous services of God in his temple.

2. Because it might be more easy for his own conscience to convince him of the neglect of these moral and relative duties toward his fellow creatures, than of his neglect of religious duties towards God: And our Saviour thought when he had named these, he had named commandments enough to shew him the imperfection of his righteousness: Therefore he does not proceed to mention them all.

And it may be noted, that our Lord reckons up these commands not in their exact order, nor exactly in the words of the Old Testament, but with a more loose and negligent way of repeating them, because he spoke to a man that was supposed to know them already: *Thou knowest all the commandments* which I refer to, even the commands of the moral Law, *Do not kill, do not steal, &c.*

Now the great and important question comes naturally into sight: In what sense did our Saviour speak these words to the young enquirer, *If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments?* Did he design to give him a plain and direct answer how he might obtain eternal life and salvation, according to the Gospel? Or did he design only to convince him of sin, by preaching the Law to

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him, in order to make him see his guilt and misery, that he might seek after a better righteousness than that of the works of the Law, another way of obtaining acceptance with God and eternal life, than merely by his own doings?

I answer, the last of these seems to be the design of Christ. He did not intend in these words to give him immediate and direct instruction, how he might actually obtain salvation, but rather first to convince him of sin, &c. and I would offer these following reasons for it.

1. The answer of Christ is exactly suited to his question. Now his question was about *eternal life to be obtained by works*, and not about the *salvation of a sinner* by the mercy of God. He did not ask, as the convinced jailor, Acts xvi. 30, "What shall I do to be saved?" But "What good work must I do to obtain eternal life by it?"

It is granted that *eternal life* is sometimes put for the final happiness of believers under the Gospel, because it is included in the salvation of Christ; yet *life* and *eternal life* are peculiarly and properly the blessings promised in the law of works, in which sense the word Salvation is never used; and the Scripture in some places by this way of expression makes this distinction evident. See the terms of the law or covenant of works, both in its command and its reward, as it is described in direct opposition to the Gospel method of salvation, in Rom. x. 5, 6. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man who doth these things shall live by them;" whereas the *righteousness of faith* (i. e. the way of justification and acceptance with God by the Gospel) says quite other things, *If thou shalt believe and confess Christ, &c.* So St. Paul describes the promised blessings of the law of works in the same manner in his epistle to the Galatians, Gal. iii. 12. "The law is not of faith, but the man who

doth

doth them shall live in them." Life is still the word of the promise. And in Rom. ii. 6, 7, where the Apostle is properly preaching the Law of works with the terms of it, it is called *immortality, eternal life*, to be obtained by *continuance in good works or well-doing*.

It is this *eternal life* and *immortality* which was implied in the Covenant of Works which God made with Adam. If he eat the forbidden fruit he should *die*; but if he observed the commands of God, he should *live*; and the *tree of life* in the midst of the garden was a symbol or sacrament of *life* and *immortality* to seal this promise to man, if he continued in his obedience to God.

Our Lord therefore gives an answer exactly according to the question, *What good thing shall I do for eternal life?* saith the enquirer. *Keep the commandments*, saith our Lord. When the young man proposes his question about final happiness in the terms and language of the covenant of works, our Lord gives an answer in the same language. "If thou wilt obtain life by doing works, these are the works which thou must do, even the works of the moral Law."

2. I suppose Jesus Christ the chief minister of the covenant of grace would not give this direction to obtain the salvation and benefits thereof, because it is the most direct answer which a Preacher of the covenant of works could give to this same enquiry; *If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments*. And this is very different from the terms of justification and salvation by the Gospel, which exclude the works of the Law, as the way to pardon and justification, and refer us to *faith in Jesus Christ*. See Gal. iii. 11, 12. Rom. x. 5, 6. Is it not most expressly asserted, that *by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified?* Rom. iii. 19, 20. Are not these works perpetually excluded by the blessed Apostle, whensoever he is describing the



he method of grace and salvation, or the means for a sinner to obtain his acceptance with God unto eternal life? See Rom. iv. 4. "To him that worketh the reward is not reckoned of grace but of debt: But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly (i. e. the man who has no works of righteousness answerable to any law) his faith is counted for righteousness," Gal. ii. 16. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Christ," &c. See Gal. iii. 8, 12.

And it is plain, that it is not merely the *Law of Levitical Ceremonies* that the Apostle speaks of, when he excludes the works of it from our justification, for it is also that *Law which is written by nature in the hearts of the Gentiles*, Rom. ii. 14, 15. It is the Law that forbids *stealing and adultery*, Rom. ii. 21, 22: The Law that forbids coveting, Rom. vii. 6, 7. even this very Law, and those commandments which our Saviour makes mention of in my text. *It is by the works of this Law no flesh shall be justified*, no man shall be saved, or obtain eternal happiness, Rom. iii. 20. Now can we suppose that Christ, the great Messenger of God to sinful man, and the Prophet of the Gospel or covenant of grace, would give the very same advice and direction to a sinner how to obtain salvation, which a Preacher of the Law, or a zealot for the covenant of works, would give to one who thought himself righteous, and never confessed himself a sinner, but enquired about obtaining life by his good works?

3. It is hardly to be thought that Christ should direct a man to fulfil the commands of the moral Law as the proper way for him to obtain eternal life, when thro' the weakness of our sinful nature, he knew the Law could not give life to men in their fallen estate, and he himself was sent to provide another way for them to obtain life. Rom.

viii. 10. "What the Law could not do in that it was weak thro' the flesh, God sent his own Son to do for us," Rom. iii. 20. "By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." This does not arise from any weakness or insufficiency of the Law itself, for it still promises life, and would secure it to any man who was perfect without sin. But as the Apostle says, *It is become weak thro' the flesh*, i. e. because man is so much immersed in sin, that he cannot perfectly fulfil it. The Law cannot give the favour of God and eternal life, because man cannot obey it.

And upon this account *the Law* of ten commands which was *engraven in stones* is called *the ministration of condemnation and death*, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9, and not *the ministration of life and righteousness*; that is the peculiar glory of the Gospel. *The Law* indeed *is holy and just and good*, and it was originally ordained *for life* to innocent man: But when the Apostle Paul came to have his conscience awakened to a sense of sin by the Law, he found it to *be unto death*, Rom. vii. 10. partly by shewing him his imperfection of obedience, as well as by irritating his indwelling sinful inclinations. So far is the Law from giving life to sinners.

God honours his Law so much that the Scripture assures us, *If there had been a Law which could have given life, eternal life, verily righteousness, justification and happiness, should have come by the Law*. Gal. iii. 21, 22. *But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin*, and condemned them by the Law, and has shewn the insufficiency of the Law to save, *that the promise of eternal life by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe*. It is not to be supposed therefore, that Jesus Christ the Son of God, who was sent into this world to give or further reveal *this promise* of eternal life *by faith*, and to provide another way to salvation and eternal life for fallen man, because the Law

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was unable to give it; I say, it is not to be supposed that this very Son of God should preach obedience to the commands of this Law, as the proper and direct way for a sinner to obtain salvation or eternal life. This would be like *building up again* the hopes of sinners to obtain salvation by the Law, *which* hopes *he came to destroy*, and to provide a much surer foundation for hope.

4. It is much more probable that Christ in these words designed to lead this young man to a sense of sin and guilt, and self-condemnation, by preaching to him the Law of God, rather than to give him immediately the direct and plain advice how a sinner might obtain eternal happiness; for this is a work which the Law can do, even in our fallen state: For *by the Law is the knowledge of sin*, Rom. iii. 20, and vii. 7. The Law can convince and condemn, though it cannot justify and save. Our Saviour knew the hearts of men; he knew this young man was conceited of his own righteousness, and he had a mind to lead his conscience to a sight and sense of the imperfection of his obedience, and therefore he preaches the Law to him in many of the express commands of it, for that very end which the Law might attain, i. e. *Conviction of sin and self-condemnation*. This is the first thing necessary in order to the salvation of men, and therefore our Saviour begins with it.

And it is well worthy our notice, that the public promulgation of the ten commandments, with such solemn terrors at mount Sinai, was designed, in the spiritual intention of it, to lay the consciences of men under guilt, rather than to make them partakers of righteousness and life, Rom. v. 20. *The Law entered that the offence might abound*, i. e. that the sins of men might appear to be great and numerous, beyond what their carnal imaginations would have supposed, without the express letter of the Law, which forbids coveting, &c. The Apostle

Paul tells us, Rom. vii. 7. *He had not known this concupiscence to be sin but by the Law*; and Mr. Samuel Clark, remarks on Exod. xix. 24. "That the charge of forbidding the people to come near mount Sinai, is often repeated, *lest God break forth upon them*, to shew that the end of the Law is rather to exclude men from God, by reason of their sins, than to justify or to give life; for which he cites," 2 Cor. iii. 7. Gal. iii. 10 — 24.

And indeed this was one considerable part of the design and business of our Saviour's personal ministry here upon earth, (*viz.*) *to preach the Law of God in its perfection, and convince men of sin*, to let them see that they were condemned and exposed to the wrath of God, that they might learn the necessity of a Saviour to atone for sin, and of the mercy of God to pardon it. He described the purity and exactness of the Law, not only to teach his Disciples and all succeeding Christians, that their obedience to the Law of God ought to be more exact and pure, more inward and spiritual, than what the Pharisees required or practised, but also to shew men the imperfection of their best righteousness, and that they were all guilty before God, that he might prepare them to receive the Gospel, partly by his own preaching it, and especially when it should be published in greater clearness, and in its full glory, after his resurrection.

Was not this one great design of his sermon upon the Mount, where he explains the Law of God in its lengths and breadths, and shews that it reaches to the thoughts of men as well as their actions? Did he not begin this sermon with, *Blessed are the poor in Spirit*, Matt. v. 3. that he might shew the way to blessedness was not a *self-sufficiency of soul*, and a *trust* in our own righteousness, but a *spiritual poverty*, i. e. a humble sense of our own weakness and sinfulness? What mean many of his parables, particularly that of the  
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*prodigal Son returning in rags and sorrow to his Father's house?* Doth it not teach us that the way to be accepted of our heavenly Father is to return to him with a deep sense of our sin and misery, with humble repentance, and asking forgiveness? What is the intent of the parable of the *Pharisee and Publican going up to pray?* Is it not to shew us that a humble, confessing, repenting sinner seeking for mercy, is much nearer to justification and the favour of God, than a man who spreads abroad his own righteousness and justifies himself? What means our blessed Lord in his perpetual reproofs of the Pharisees who *trusted in themselves that they were righteous?* Did he not frequently talk thus to convince men of sin, and shew them how imperfect their obedience was, and how insufficient to procure acceptance with God, and to let them see that repentance and confession of sin, and trust in divine mercy, are the only way to salvation.

It is no wonder then if our Saviour had the same design in his eye when he saw a rich young man of a Pharisaical Spirit, come to enquire the way to heaven by *doing some good work*; it is no wonder that he begun to talk to him of obedience to the Law, in order to convince him of sin, and shew him that he was not sufficiently righteous to obtain eternal life by his righteousness.

It is most likely that our blessed Lord had a special intention in this place to try the young man, whether he knew his own state as a sinner who wanted pardon, and whether he was prepared for the Gospel or no: Whether he stood convinced of sin, and desirous of salvation, such as Christ came to procure for those who were sensible of their guilt and danger. I have before shewed that the first sentence that Christ spoke to him was with design to try his opinion about himself, the Messiah, when he called him Good, whether he was one with God or no: And now he tries his opinion.

opinion about the inward and spiritual perfection of the Law, and about his own power to keep it, and about his own hope of justification thereby : And therefore he at first gives him such an answer as should make him bethink himself, whether he had obeyed the Law of God perfectly or no.

If he had found him sensible of his guilt and his imperfections, then most probably the compassionate Jesus would have preached to him the pardoning grace of the Gospel, which he came to offer to those who repent and believe in the Saviour. But when he heard the vain enquirer justify himself as a righteous man, and say, *All these commands have I kept from my youth*, then our Saviour put him to a fresh and more painful trial of his sincerity and obedience to God, and that partly for his conviction, instead of saying, *Repent and believe*; he did not proceed so far as to preach repentance to him, because he saw him unconvinced of sin; and he ~~showed~~ us that he came *not to call these righteous men but sinners to repentance*, Matt. ix. 13. i. e. those who own themselves to be sinners.

This leads me to the fifth or last Reason, to prove that this answer was not designed by Christ as a direction of the querist how to obtain salvation. It is a quite different answer to the like questions that is given by Christ, and by the Apostles, when they designed to preach the Gospel in plain, direct and express language, Mark i. 15. Christ saith, "Repent and believe the Gospel," John vi. 40, "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him, hath everlasting life." And again, "This is the work of God, the great work which God now requires, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent," John vi. 28, 29. So St. Peter, Acts ii. 38, "Repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ:" So Paul, Acts xvi. 31, "Believe

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved: And so John speaks, “This is his commandment that ye believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,” 1 John iii. 23. These are the plain and direct advices of Christ and his Apostles to sinful men, in order to obtain the favour of God and eternal life.

To suppose therefore that Christ did in this place, and in these words, direct the enquirer into the proper way of salvation by the Gospel, is to suppose that Christ differed greatly from himself, in the directions he gave, how men might be saved; and that he and his Apostles, and particularly St. Paul, taught very different doctrines; that Christ taught the way to salvation by the works of the Law, and the Gospel taught it by repentance and faith, without the works of the Law. But this would set Christ and his Apostles so much at variance with themselves, that it is not to be admitted.

I come now to answer some objections against my sense of this text.

1. Doth not Christ say, that “to love the Lord our God is the way to life,” Luke x. 27, 28? Is not this the same thing in effect, as when he directs the young man to eternal life, by “keeping the commandments,” and that in the same language? For when the Lawyer enquires, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus gives him this advice, “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself: This do and thou shalt live.” Thus eternal life is promised by Christ himself, to our loving God and man, which is the epitome of all the moral commands in one, for “Love is the fulfilling of the Law,” Rom. xiii. 8, 10.

Ans. 1. It is very plain that in that place our Saviour is preaching the covenant of works, as well as in my text, and that for the same purpose too,

too, for the conviction of sin. This Lawyer was not a humble and sincere enquirer, but one who came to tempt and ensnare him; and then it is no wonder if Jesus did not give him a plain and direct answer according to the method of salvation by the Gospel. And though he directed others to repent and believe, yet he did not treat a vain young Pharisee, who thought himself righteous, and a cunning Lawyer who designed to ensnare him, in the same manner that he would treat persons who were sensible of their sin, and sought the way to obtain pardon and happiness, nor did he give them the same directions.

Ans. 2. Let it be further considered, that the life-time of Christ was not the appointed season to speak the glories of the Gospel in the fullest and plainest language. His frequent business and practice was to preach the Law, to reprove sin, and prepare men for the fuller and more compleat ministry of the Gospel, which after his death he sent his Apostles to preach by the power of his own Spirit: And they published the Gospel of salvation by repentance and faith in the blood of Christ, and forgiveness through his atonement, much plainer and clearer, and fuller than Christ himself did in his life-time. That Gospel which he taught them secretly, *they proclaimed* as it were *upon the house top*, according to his order, Matt. x. 27.

Though Christ himself gave such hints of this Gospel in his preaching, as were sufficient for salvation to those that would receive them, yet he might be said to be sent rather with this dreadful commission to the generality of the Jews, Matt. xiii. 13. Isa. vi. 10. "Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes," &c. They were such a stubborn self-conceited and disobedient people, that God justly gave them up to their own blindness and hardness: And

for



for this reason our Saviour spake often the great things of the Gospel to them in parables. He was ordained to "be a stumbling stone and rock of offence to the house of Israel and Judah," Isai. viii. 14. 1 Pet. ii. 8. and this by the just judgment of God, for their stoning the Prophets, and murdering the former messengers of heaven, for their forsaking the Law of God, and making it void by their traditions, and for their violent opposition to Christ his Son. Christ was not always bound to speak the Gospel to this people in as plain words as he could, for reasons that the wisdom of God was well acquainted with, reasons that the justice of God righteously determined, and the goodness of God did not think fit to oppose. And it is no wonder at all that he doth speak in this way to those men who came with curious questions and with evil purposes to ensnare him, as the Lawyer did.

2. But can we suppose that Christ would deceive a young man, who came seriously to enquire the way to eternal life? Can we imagine that Christ, in whom dwells all wisdom, truth and love, should give such directions as could never bring a man to heaven, and especially considering that he came into the world on purpose *to bring life and immortality to light among men*, and to shew them the true way to heaven?

Answ. 1. That we may secure the goodness of God and the mercy of Christ from any reproach in this case, I say further, that Christ did take a very wise and regular method with this young man to bring him to salvation, if he would have stayed to attend to it, and had not been full of evil prejudices, of self righteousness, and the love of this world. For the first thing to be done in order to bring sinners to heaven is to convince them of sin, and this is done by the Law. This the Apostle Paul sheweth at large in his epistle to the Romans, that

that men by beholding the perfection of the Law, and their inability to perform it, might become *dead to all hope from the Law*, as he was when he says, Gal. ii. 19, *I by the Law am dead to the Law*; and that they might not expect life by the Law, but that they might seek for salvation by the way of repentance and faith in Christ, and obtain forgiveness of sins through the grace of God in the Gospel.

Answ. 2. Tho' this young man had a vain conceit of his own righteousness, yet there was something in him naturally pleasing, agreeable and engaging, so that Christ *looked upon him and loved him*, Mark x. 21. He had some liking to such a towardly and hopeful youth, and preached the Law to him, to convince him of sin, in order to his salvation: But when he professed himself to be so righteous in his own eyes, as to *have kept all the commands of the Law*, his divine wisdom then saw it proper to put a harder trial upon him, to *sell all that he had and give to the poor, and become a follower of Christ*. Now if this young man had loved God so well as he pretended, and believed Christ to be a Prophet come from God, he ought to have obeyed him, even in this difficult and self-denying command; which command was put upon him, partly to convince him that he did not love God so well as he imagined, and which hard trial probably would never have been put upon him, if he had not been so conceited of his own righteousness.

It must be observed also, to vindicate the honour, faithfulness and goodness of Christ, that if the young man had followed these directions of Christ at the end of the conference, he had been saved: Our blessed Lord gave him sufficient advice for eternal life, if he would have taken it. "Come, *sell what thou hast, and give it to the poor, and follow me, and be my Disciple*;" and then it would follow,

follow, "Thou shalt learn of me the way to heaven more perfectly, and I will teach thee the way of repentance, faith, and holiness unto compleat salvation." But the young man loved his money, and went away sorrowful, that he could not keep all his riches and obtain eternal life too.

3. Doth not God all along in the writings of the Old Testament, in successive ages, promise *Life* in this same sort of language to those that observe and do his commandments, and that, both by Moses and by the Prophets? And did not the Sain'ts, under the Old Testament, obtain life this way? Lev. xviii. 5. *He that doth them* (that is the commands of God) *shall live in them*, Ezek. xx. 11. this promise is repeated: And in Ezek. xxx. 15. "If the wicked walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die:" Now this *dying* cannot mean a *natural death*, for they knew they must die naturally; therefore it must mean a *deliverance from eternal death, and assurance of eternal life*. "It is therefore certain, that all pious persons, under the Old Testament, obtained a right to life eternal, by this observance of the moral precepts of the Law."

Ans. 1. This life which is here promised in these texts to the Jews, in a literal sense, chiefly means *long life in their own land*, and peace and freedom from sorrows and miseries in this world: And tho' the freedom or preservation from death (which is promised by Moses to those who keep the statutes, laws and ordinances enjoined to Israel) does not mean an entire preservation from *temporal death*; so neither in the obvious and literal sense does it mean a security from *eternal death*, but rather a freedom from death, as it is a general term used to include all temporal and painful evils, and particularly from sudden and violent death, from cruel, lingering and shameful death,  
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from death in foreign countries, and untimely death in the midst of their years. This is very evident, if you read those expressions of Moses, Deut. vi. 24, 25. and Deut. xxx. 15, — 30 Ezek. xxxiii. 10, 15. So Solomon, in his prayer, 1 Kings viii. 31, — 50. Nehemiah, in his prayer, Neh. ix. 29, — 31. teach us to explain it. Life is put for all that is good, and Death for all that is evil.

It is evident that God governed the Jews with regard to temporal blessings and temporal curses, in the way of a covenant of works. As to the external and temporal state of their persons, their church, and their nation, they were under a covenant of works; and God, who was their King or political Head, dealt with them from time to time in saving them, or in punishing them according to their works: And it is very observable, that it is this very promise of Life, upon condition of *doing the works* of the Law which the Apostle takes to describe that *covenant of works*, by which the Jews could not be saved as to their eternal state, see Rom. x. 3, 5. and ix. 31. "The man that doth them shall live in them."

If it be *objected*, that God allowed of their repentance for sin in this his Law or Covenant as their King, and sometimes he saved the nation upon their repentance, and therefore it must include the Gospel or *Covenant of Grace*; yet I answer, it may still be called a *Covenant of Works*, because a mere external visible humiliation and reformation, without a real penitence at heart, was accepted by God as their King, as sufficient to divert divine judgments from the nation, and sometimes from particular persons, who had provoked God's anger by external and visible iniquities. 1 Kings xxi. 2. "Sceft thou how Ahab humbleth himself? I will not bring this evil in his days;" whereas all his humiliation was his rending his clothes, wearing of sackcloth and fast-



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ing," and a little outward appearance of reformation, but it is evident that his heart was not changed. See 1 Kings xxii. 27.

It may be granted, indeed, there was much grace and mercy mingled in this political Law or Covenant of Life, between God as a civil King, and Israel as his subjects in this world; but still this was not the Gospel or Covenant of Grace and Salvation, whereby the pious Jews were saved from the wrath of God, as their spiritual lord and ruler in the other world, and whereby they had their sins pardoned, and were made partakers of eternal life; for the rites of the Law could not cleanse the conscience from sin in the sight of God, Heb. ix. 9.

Anf. 2. Besides the frequent charges which are given to the Jews to keep the commandments of God, in order to obtain life, we find also frequent calls to inward and hearty repentance, to make *their hearts clean, to forsake their evil thoughts, to rend their hearts and not their garments, and so trust in the pardoning mercy of God*; and there are many promises of pardon to the penitent, and the favour of God *to those that fear him and hope in his mercy*, in order to lead them to obtain the happiness of the other world and eternal life. See Isa. lv. 7, 8. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon." Pf. cxxx. 4, &c. "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared. Let Israel hope in the Lord; with the Lord is plenteous redemption. He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." One might transcribe many pages to this purpose out of Isaiah, Jeremiah and David. This is more evangelical language, shewing the way for sinners to obtain salvation: "This is the Gospel that was preached to them as well as to us," Heb. iv. 2.

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And even to them was preached also the Gospel of the Messiah, and the salvation of men *by the Messiah the seed of Abraham*, Gal. iii. 8. Isa. liii. 5, 6, 11. "He was wounded for our iniquities:" "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." And it is said, Acts x. 43. "To him give all the Prophets witness, that whosoever believeth in him shall receive forgiveness of sins thro' his name." Thus it plainly appears, that the keeping of the commands, as written in the moral Law, was not the proper rule of their acceptance with God unto eternal life, under the Old Testament: For there is nothing of this doctrine of repentance and forgiveness, nor of the Messiah, contained in the ten commands.

Let it be observed, that even in those legal promises, which ensure life to those who kept the commands of God, there is a more spiritual and evangelical sense sometimes implied: For under this word life, and these temporal blessings which were promised, eternal life and eternal blessings were typified and held forth to those that looked thro' the veil, and that fulfilled the Will of God in spiritual and sincere obedience, with an humble sense of their sins, and trust in divine mercy. But the ground of their acceptance with God unto eternal life, or their right to heaven and salvation, was not their performance of the works of the Law; for their best works were all imperfect, and *they were saved by faith even as we*. Galatians iii. 6, 9. by trusting to pardoning mercy, so far as it was revealed under that dispensation.

And as the salvation itself was typified by temporal blessings, so the way to this salvation, which was repentance and trust in the mercy of God through the Messiah, was typified by offering sacrifices, and by many washings and purifyings, both by blood and water, which implied a confession of their defilement: And the saints or

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 righteous men of that day, hoped for the mercy of God, as discovered more plainly in the promises, and perhaps also, some might understand it as hinted in these types and figures. They knew that blessedness was to come upon them to whom God imputed not their sins, or to whom the Lord imputed righteousness, or accounted them as righteous in his sight by his mercy, though they were very imperfect, and far from righteousness, i. e. a perfect justifying righteousness, even if they put together all their works of obedience to the commands of God. David often speaks of the impossibility of our attaining acceptance with God by our works, Psal. cxxx. and cxliii. 14 and 19. "If thou shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. There is none righteous; no, not one. Who can understand his errors?" He seeks for pardon of sin by repentance and trust in the mercy of God, Psal. li. and cxliii. &c. And he pronounces the blessedness of those to whom God forgives their iniquities, Psal. xxxii. or to whom he imputes righteousness without works, as St. Paul explains him, Rom. iv. 6. and \* this encouraged him to confess his sins, and repent of them, as in Psal. xxxii. and li. and cxxx.

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\* And here, by the way, I would take occasion to explain one great difficulty, which occurs in the reading of St. Paul's Epistles; especially those to the Romans and the Galatians. It is evident that when St. Paul designs to represent the terms of the covenant of works, viz. "Do this and live," and "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," (Rom. x. 5, Gal. iii. 10, 12,) he doth it by citations out of the Old Testament, because the language of the political covenant which God made with the Jews, (as he was their King, and they were his

Thus it appears, that the keeping the commandments of the law, was neither under the Old Testament nor the New, the way to salvation and eternal life for sinners: But since *the law was weak*, and unable to save, by reason of the weakness of sinful nature, Rom. viii. 3, that is, since the law promises life only to those who obey the commands perfectly, and men could not obtain life this way by reason of the imperfection of their obedience, there were many calls to repentance, and to trust in the mercy of God, given to the Jews, in the Old Testament, as the prescribed way for sinners to obtain salvation; which duties, together with the grounds of them, and the blessings promised to them, are much more clearly revealed in the New Testament.

In Rom. x. 9, "Justification is expressly ascribed to faith; and that not as including works, but only as being that principle which, when it is cordial and sincere, will certainly produce them:

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his people) was the language of the covenant of works, and God governed them very much in that way, with regard to their temporal rewards and punishments.

On the other hand, when St. Paul gives us the terms of the covenant of grace, or the Gospel, viz. Faith in the grace of God through a Saviour, he also cites the Old Testament. So Rom. ii. 21, Rom. iv. 3, 6, 7, x: 6—11, Gal. iii. 8, 11. Because the covenant of grace, or the way of salvation and eternal life, was also prescribed, though in a more obscure manner, in the Old Testament, partly by promises made to repentance and trust in the mercy of God, and a Messiah that was to come, and partly by sacrifices and washings, which were types and figures of repentance and pardon, thro' the blood of Christ, and sanctification of the Spirit. Thus the "righteousness of God was witnessed by the law and the prophets," Rom. iii. 21. I think without this clue, it is impossible to read and understand the great Apostle's way of arguing in those Epistles.



I say, not as including all those works which by the Gospel are required to salvation, for then the righteousness of faith must be described as the righteousness of the law, viz. that the man who doth these things shall live in them, which is contrary to the words of the Apostle, ver. 5, 6." So far does the force of truth, in some places constrain honest minds to admit and confess what in other places they are very unwilling to allow, and which they almost contradict: But this must be charged on the common or universal influence of human frailty and mistaken prejudices, and for want of an equal, uniform, comprehensive view of all the parts of religion together, which no human mind perhaps in the present state can arrive at.

4. There is another objection which may be started against my exposition of this text, that is drawn from Rev. xxii. 14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city," i. e. into heaven, and enjoy eternal life. Surely, say some, these words must be acknowledged to be the language of the Gospel, or the covenant of grace, and not of the law, or the covenant of works: For they are the words of Christ himself, after his ascension to heaven, and yet it is plain, that doing the commandments is here represented as the way to obtain eternal life in heaven.

Anf. But it is as plain that doing the ten commandments of the moral law, are not the only things that are meant here in this text: But these commandments which give a right to the tree of life, &c. include at least, if not chiefly design, the peculiar commands of God in the Gospel, repentance for sin, faith in the pardoning mercy of God through a Redeemer, which is productive of love to God and man. To prove this read, Matt. iv. 17. "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is

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at hand." Mark i. 15, "Repent and believe the Gospel." Mark xvi. 16, "He that believeth shall be saved." John iii. 22, 23, "And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight: And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment."

Now as Adam by doing the peculiar commands which God gave to him, might have obtained a right to the benefits of the literal tree of life, i. e. immortality: So Christians by doing the peculiar commandments of the Gospel, may be said, in some sense, to obtain a right to the benefits of the spiritual tree of life (i. e. Jesus Christ), and may enter into heaven: But a mere obedience to the commandments of the moral law is never prescribed as the way to obtain a right to the benefits of Christ, but rather an obedience to the commands of the Gospel, which are peculiarly repentance and faith in Christ.

It may be yet further observed, that the commands to which Christ directed the young man in my text, in order to enter into life, were not repentance and faith, but only the ten commands of the moral law: for he directs the young man precisely to the commands of the moral law, and tells him, *Thou knowest what these commands are.* Now this young man was so full of his own obedience to that law, and so confident of it, that he seems not to know the commands of confession of sin and repentance for it; much less did he think of the other command of faith in the mercy of God through a Mediator. So that if it be never so much allowed, that obedience to these humbling and self-abasing commands of the Gospel, repentance and faith, may give a right to the benefits of Christ, and to an entrance into heaven, yet an

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obedience to the ten commands of the moral law could not make a sinner's way to heaven and eternal life: But these ten commands are those which Christ points out to the young enquirer.

Upon the whole it appears, that when our Saviour saith to the young man, "If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments," he did not mean to give him the plain and direct prescription of the Gospel, in order to the salvation of a sinner, but rather began with him in preaching the law, in order to shew him his duty and to convince him of sin.

And from this view of things, I think we may draw this plain observation: That wheresoever the keeping the commands of God is proposed to men in Scripture as the way to life, it either means that the way to obtain long temporal life and temporal blessings, was to observe the Jewish laws, according to the political covenant of God made with the Jewish nation at Sinai; or it means that perfect obedience of thought, word, and action to all these commands which God gives us, is the way to obtain life eternal by the covenant of works and law of innocency: Or if at any time the context plainly determines this phrase, *keeping the commandments*, to signify the way to obtain salvation under the Gospel, then the word *command* must extend to include the evangelical commands of repentance for sin, and trust in the pardoning mercy of God through a Mediator.

And the reason is plain; for this is the great difference always observed between the law and gospel, or between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, that the covenant of works or the law, teaches us to claim life as a debt by our own exact obedience to the commands of the law; but the covenant of grace or the Gospel teaches us humbly to seek for life or salvation by confession of sin and repentance, and by depending on the  
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mands of God always upon their consciences, and by setting before them the vengeance and curses of the law of God, which are due to sinners, to preserve the world from universal disorder and wickedness. If there were no such representations of the holiness and justice of God in the world, what shameful impieties against God, and most outrageous iniquities and villainies would be spread among the children of men: So that there would be no such thing as peace, and civility and honesty to be found in such places. The Apostle Paul tells us, 1 Tim. i. 9, 10, "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."

The holy Apostle acknowledges, where the law of God is originally written in the heart, and a man is made righteous by a thorough sanctification of all the powers of nature as it is in heaven, there is no such need of the commands, threatnings, and terrors of a penal law, to keep men in the practice of obedience; their own renewed nature, their sincere and universal love to God, and to his law, will powerfully incline them to the practice of holiness, without the terrors and punishments from the hand of the blessed God, being always kept before their eyes.

It is true, there are some cases wherein the law of God may not be well known, even to good men, or may be mistaken by them, and there may be need of special commands to discover what is our duty, and what is sin: But where the law is well known, the inward power of universal goodness in the soul, without these outward terrors, is made effectual

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effectual to preserve holiness and obedience in the life.

But perhaps you will then reply, Where there are true Christians found, of what use is it for them to keep the law of God? To this I would give several particular answers, besides the first and general one. In general I say then, it must be acknowledged, that there are so many remains of indwelling sin in most men, that fear of the punishment of God has its use in this imperfect state, to prevent the soul from warping aside to sinful practices, under strong and special temptations. Such frail and imperfect creatures are we in this present state.

Ans. 1. Though we are not saved from the punishment of hell, nor pardoned and accepted to eternal life and happiness in heaven, by virtue of our poor imperfect obedience, and keeping the commands of the moral law, yet we can never be saved without it: For our love to the law of God, and a hearty inclination to keep it, is a great part of the very salvation which the Gospel provides for sinful men. Jesus Christ the Son of God is become our Saviour, not only to save us from God's wrath, 1 Thes. i. 10, but also to save us from our sins, Matt. i. 21, and Tit. ii. 14, "He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people: zealous of good works." We must be restored to the image of God as well as to his favour; now his image is all holiness.

Mankind by the fall have not only lost their original state of innocence and happiness, but their natural powers are corrupted, their mind, will and passions are perverted, and defiled, and turned away from God, and from their duty to his law. Now it is one great design of the Gospel to rectify these disorders in the nature of man: It is one of the promises of the Gospel, that the law of God shall

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shall be written in our hearts, Heb. x. 16, and  
one of the great offices of Christ, as a Saviour, is  
by all the methods of his grace and power, to re-  
duce our hearts to the love of God and his law ;  
“ He is made sanctification to us as well as re-  
demption,” 1 Cor. i. 30. So that for men to talk  
of being saved without love and obedience to the  
moral law of God, is to talk plain inconsistencies,  
or to affirm what reason can never allow, and  
what Scripture and the Gospel never designed ; in  
short it is to talk of being saved without salvation.

The moral law of God is of eternal obligation  
upon his creatures : And it would be our constant  
duty to obey it, even if we could suppose there  
were no such future state, nor such eternal life  
provided for men as the Gospel reveals. It arises  
from the relation between God and his creatures.  
We can never be disengaged from this duty by the  
Gospel, which brings in pardon and mercy to save  
us from the punishment due to our transgressions  
of the law ; but not to release us from obedience  
to it.

A holy God will not save sinners from hell, and  
forgive them their sins, without making them holy.  
Christ, in all his abounding love to sinners, will  
not become a minister of sin, Gal. ii. 17, 19, 20.  
The design of God in his grace to sinners, by Jesus  
Christ, is, that “ they might be holy and without  
blame before him in love,” Eph. i. 4. And hereby  
we shew that the grace of God, in the forgiveness  
of sin, is not lost upon us, but obtains the end for  
which it was designed, to bring us back to God  
and holiness.

Ans. 2. Good works are necessary to manifest  
our gratitude to God for his pardoning mercy :  
These are our returns of love to the blessed Jesus  
for his dying love manifested to us, 2 Cor. v. 15.  
“ He died for all, that they who live should not  
henceforth live to themselves, but to him who died  
for

for them, and rose again." 1 John iv. 19, We are bound to love him, and "we do love him because he first loved us." 1 Cor. vi. 20, "Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your body and spirit, which are God's."

Ans. 3. Good works are also necessary to render us useful to men our fellow-creatures, and to make our profession honourable in their sight. Good works are recommended by St. Paul for this purpose, Tit. iii. 8. "This is a faithful saying, and I will that thou constantly affirm, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men" It is necessary, to convince the world that our Gospel is all holy, and that it indulges and allows of no known sin: That this Gospel is a divine blessing to mankind, that it carries blessings with it wheresoever it comes, that it cures the vices of the mind, and the sinful passions of the heart, that it suppresses all injustice and cruelty, fraud and malice, envy and oppression, and every evil work which sin and Satan have introduced into this world. A Christian must preach and prove the purity and power of his Gospel in his whole conversation, that it changes a lion into a lamb, an earth-worm into an angel, and a son of Adam into a child of God. This is the way to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour," as St. Paul expresses it, Tit. ii. 10. This must force a conviction upon the eyes and ears, and consciences of men, that there is something divine and heavenly in our religion.

Ans. 4. Without holiness and good works we are not, nor can be conformable to our Lord Jesus Christ: And yet all the members must be conformed to their Head, when they are presented by him before the Father. Rom. viii. 29, God has predestinated all his children to be conformable to the image of his Son, that he may appear to be  
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the First-born, and in all things have the pre-eminence. He must present them without spot and blemish, like himself, in the other world, that they may dwell with him for ever. And in this world the disciples must resemble their Lord; Christians should be public blessings to the world, as their master was, "who went about doing good," Acts x. 38; and they should be known to be his followers by this blessed character.

Ans. 5. Another use of good works is to evidence the truth of our faith, and our interest in this salvation, James ii. 20, 24. For faith which does not produce good works is dead, and cannot save us. Our faith in Christ is made known to ourselves, as well as to the world, by our works, Rom. viii. 1. "They who are in Christ Jesus, and are free from the condemnation of the law, must walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," 1 John ii. 2, 3, 5, "Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments:" And it is by keeping or obeying his word, that we know we are in him.

Ans. 6. Works of holiness, a new heart and new obedience, are needful to fit and prepare us for the actual possession and blessedness of heaven, for without holiness no man shall see God.\* And in this view a sincere return to God with obedience to his commands, is a necessary requisite, in order to our final salvation, Heb. xii. 14. This blissful vision.

\* Note, when I speak of good works, or works of holiness, as necessary toward our final salvation, or our complete possession of heavenly blessedness, I mean all the inward exercises of holy fear, and love, and hope, and obedience, and dependance, and patience in the heart, &c. as well as the outward performances of the acts of religion and righteousness in the life: But it must still

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vision of God is reserved only for the pure in heart, Matt. v. 8. Sanctification is the beginning of our salvation, and it is eternally necessary to continue it. We can never be happy in the presence of God till we are like him in holiness. Nor can we be fit company for the holy angels, or the Spirits of the just made perfect, unless we are conformable to their temper.

And it should be observed also, that this preparation or fitness for heaven, may be sometimes represented as a right to the blessedness of it, because the promises of heaven are sometimes made to those who are thus qualified and prepared, and these promises give them a right to it. Matt. v. 3, 5, 6, 8, &c. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," &c. Rev. xxii. 14. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter thro' the gates into the city." Yet it may be remembered what I said before, that these commandments do not signify directly the ten commandments of the Law, but rather the commands of Jesus Christ, or of God in the Gospel, which indeed include a sincere obedience to the moral Law, and something more, (viz.) Repentance and faith in Christ.

Ans. 7. I might add, in the last place, that "Holiness of life or obedience to the commands of God, is necessary in order to make the process of the last judgment appear equitable in the eyes of all mankind; for Christ the Judge shall render  
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still be understood with this limitation, viz. They are necessary where there is time and room, opportunity and capacity for the performance of them; so that this doth not exclude infants from salvation, who are not capable of exercising the principles of grace: Nor doth it exclude dying penitents, who have no space of time allowed them for living a life of holiness.

to every one according to their works," Rev. xxii. 12. Rom. ii. 5, 6. 1 Cor. xv. 58. And indeed this is one chief design of God's appointing such a solemn and public transaction as the last judgment, that all the creation may see the equity of the dealings of God with men, that he awards the eternal recompense to saints and sinners, according to their different characters of vice and virtue, sin and holiness. "The vessels of wrath are by their own rebellion and impenitence fitted to destruction, and the vessels of mercy are by sanctifying grace and holiness before prepared unto glory," Rom. ix. 22, 23.

Tho' our own works are by no means sufficient to atone for sin, or to procure the favour of God or eternal life, for such guilty creatures as we are, yet there is a rewardable condecency in the works of holiness, and there is many a promise of heavenly rewards made to them in the New Testament: Now when Christ will adjudge the wicked to hell, and the saints to heaven, the whole creation must approve the equity of his dealings with men. In the mean time the saints will admire the grace of God, and the mediation of Christ, while they see how unworthy they and their works are of such a glorious reward.

Thus we find there is abundant reason for our obedience to the commands of the moral Law, tho' it is not made the proper condition, or prescribed term of our acceptance with God, and of obtaining happiness by the Gospel; for it is only perfect obedience to these commands in thought, word and deed, can give us a right to eternal life, according to the Law. And yet a sincere endeavour after universal obedience to them, is one necessary requisite of our being approved by Christ at last, and our actual entrance into heaven, according to the Gospel: Hereupon I am bold to affirm, that those persons whom all these reasons cannot

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cannot draw to the sincere practice of holiness, may be sure they never believed in Christ, and are not partakers of the salvation of the Gospel; for the great and necessary duty of Christianity is "Faith which works by love," Gal. v. 6. "The heart is purified by faith," Acts xv. 9. And "Faith without works is dead, and is unable to save us," James ii. 20, 26.

1. It is a dangerous thing to mistake the great design of Christ's ministry here on earth. Let us learn from this discourse, that our Saviour often preached to sinners the Gospel of grace and forgiveness, of repentance and faith in himself; yet that his chief business here, was not to preach the Gospel constantly, nor to preach it in its full light, perfection and glory; but rather to prepare the way for it when he had laid the foundation in his own death and resurrection, and when his kingdom should be set up in the world by his Apostles, and by his Spirit, and built upon this foundation. He prepared the way for his Spirit, and his Apostles, even as John the Baptist prepared the way for him.

The great business of Christ in this life on earth, was to appear with the characters of the Messiah on him; to answer the types and prophecies that went before concerning him; to pass through the stages of life without sin as our example; to yield a perfect obedience to the law, and fulfil all those precepts in perfection which we could never fulfil; to preach the law in the spirituality and perfection of its demands, and begin to open the Gospel; to resign and submit himself to death, as a sacrifice for sin, devoted to the punishing justice of God; And hereby he laid a foundation for clearer preaching the Gospel of forgiveness of sins through his blood, which doctrine he just mentions to his disciples at the last supper.

As



As for his own public preaching, it chiefly consisted in clear and full explications of the law of God in its spirituality, which had been shamefully obscured and curtailed by the Jewish Doctors; in bringing the invisible worlds of heaven and hell into a nearer and brighter view; in vindicating his own conduct against the accusations of men; in maintaining his own character, as one sent of God; in reproving the Jews for their corrupt traditions, for their hypocrisy, for their self-righteousness, for their uncharitableness to the Gentiles, and thus calling the world to conviction of sin and repentance, and preparing the way by his parables for the reception of the Gentiles into his Church. When he preached the Gospel of his atonement for sin and faith in his blood, it was rather in secret to his disciples; or if in public, it was generally in dark sayings and parables, and mystical expressions, such as, "The Son of Man being lifted up and drawing all men to him, giving his flesh for meat to his people, and his blood for drink," &c. The plainest intimations, which, I think, Christ ever gave of the salvation of sinners by his own death as a sacrifice, to people who were not his disciples, was in those metaphorical words two or three times repeated in the tenth chapter of John, "I am the good shepherd, who giveth his life for the sheep." But when his death and resurrection had laid a fairer foundation for the Gospel, then he taught it his disciples much more plainly after his resurrection, both by his conversation and by his Spirit, and sent them to publish it to the whole world more gloriously than ever he himself taught it to the Jews.

Now, I say, a mistake in the design of Christ's public preaching, may lead many people into some unhappy mis-apprehensions about several things, and particularly about the way of salvation by the Gospel. For,

I. When

1. When we hear Christ preach the law so much, and speak of entering into life by keeping the commandments, if we imagine all this to be the clear Gospel, we shall seek to be saved by the works of the law, which the Apostle so severely reproves the Galatians for, and the Jewith Christians, who dwelt among the Romans, Rom. ix. 31, 32, Gal. iii. 1. &c. and iv. 21, and v. 4. And if our opinions and conduct be the same, we shall expose ourselves to the same sacred reproof of the Apostle, and be greatly bewildered in the way to heaven.

2. Such a mistake in the design of Christ's preaching the law, as though he taught it as the way for the salvation of sinners, will incline us to expound the law in so gross and defective a sense, as the Pharisees did of old, that so expounded, sinners may be able to keep it, and obey the commands of it sufficient to gain salvation thereby. It will tempt us to retrench and diminish the perfection of its demands of universal holiness in thought, word, and deed; because otherwise we cannot yield a perfect obedience. Whereas it is much more glorious to God, the Governor of the world, to suppose his holy law still maintains its own perfect purity, and its original demands of constant universal obedience; and it is more glorious to God our Saviour, to suppose that he has provided an effectual way for the salvation of sinful creatures, who trust in divine mercy, and who love the law of God, though their best obedience to it be very defective.

3. Such a mistake will lead ministers to neglect the mention of the death and sufferings of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, and as the foundation of our pardon and our hope; it will lead them to omit these important points in their descriptions of the Gospel, and in their accounts of faith in Christ; because Christ never spoke so publicly and plainly

to the people, of making atonement for sin by his death. And upon this account we shall be in danger of leaving this doctrine out of our directions to sinners when they seek the way to salvation, which is now made plainer and more necessary since the death and resurrection of Christ are accomplished, since the Apostles have particularly explained this doctrine, and the New Testament is complete.

4. This mistake will tempt us to set Christ and his Apostles at variance about the way of salvation. Christ says, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;" and the Apostles say, "The law is the ministration of death," but "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and "we are justified by faith without the works of the law," &c. And thus we shall make the Holy Scripture contradict itself: Or if we endeavour to accommodate and reconcile these seeming oppositions, upon a supposition that Christ preached the Gospel, it can never be done, with fairness and justness of thought, without straining the words of Scripture from their natural sense; and it will ever bring a darkness upon the distinction between the Law and Gospel, and leave the way of salvation by the Gospel under much confusion.

5. This will tempt and incline us to expound the clear Gospel, which we find in the writings and preaching of the Apostles after the death and resurrection of Christ, by one of the legal expressions of our Saviour, when in his own life-time he preached the law for the conviction of sinners: We shall interpret the words of the Gospel into the sense of the law of works: We shall almost explain away the covenant of grace, and make a covenant of works of it: And thus, perhaps, expose ourselves to the danger of St. Paul's censure by preaching another Gospel, or perverting the Gospel of Christ, Gal i. 8.

6. This

6. This mistake will lead us to slight and despise the writings of the Apostles, as though they never did nor could preach the Gospel so clearly as Christ himself; whereas they were really designed and sent forth after the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ, to preach the full Gospel to the nations in clearer and stronger language than Jesus himself ever did to the multitude; they were instructed and commissioned to publish the way to salvation by Christ, in a brighter and more explicit manner than his divine wisdom thought proper to do before he had actually died and rose again, by which transactions he laid the foundation for preaching the Gospel more clearly and perfectly.

A mistake about the personal ministry of Christ, in such passages as this in my text, will make us look upon the glorious and evangelical paragraphs in the sermons and the epistles of Peter, Paul, and John, as mere affectionate and fervent pieces of discourse, according to the warm temper and lively fancies of those honest and zealous men, who in the heat of their spirits spoke many things mystically and unintelligibly. This hath been the professed opinion of some who are called Christians concerning the great Apostle; and upon this account they think none of his writings are to be read without great caution: But if you will seek the way of salvation aright (say they) you must go to the Mount, and hear our Saviour's sermon there, in the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of the Gospel of St. Matthew, while they neglect the more evangelical speeches even of Christ himself. This has been the language of some men, the leaders of the consciences of the ignorant multitude, who are by nature inclined enough to a covenant of works, and need not to be taught and persuaded to build all their hopes of heaven upon the works of the law, which Christ never designed in that noble and admirable sermon of his on the mountain.

But



But now if we suppose Christ frequently preaching the law, on purpose to shew the Jews the grossest defects and imperfection of their obedience, and their need of a Saviour, and giving such hints of the Gospel as were suited to that dispensation of his life and personal ministry; and if we suppose the Apostles more fully preaching this Gospel (which our Saviour just opened and begun in his lifetime) and publishing it in all its glory of righteousness and grace, after the death and resurrection of Christ, because it was not proper to be thus clearly preached before, then may we reconcile the different language of St. Paul and of Christ, when one saith, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and the other, "If thou wilt enter into life keep the ten commandments." It is certain that the law is not against the promises, Gal. iii. 21; but the law is our schoolmaster, and leader of us as children to Christ; so the Greek word *παιδείας* means, Gal. iii. 24. Conviction of sin by Christ's preaching of the law, leads men, as in a lower school, as yet, to proceed farther, and to seek for and embrace the grace of Christ in the Gospel, as it is preached more fully and clearly by the Apostles, under the teachings of his Spirit.

This scheme and view of things being well adjusted in the mind, will help us to understand many of those legal expressions in the New Testament, which might seem to lead us to the covenant of works again, or which seem to mingle the Law and Gospel for salvation, if we will but remember that the Holy Ghost in the New Testament sometimes discovers the law in its perfection of demands for the conviction of sin, as well as for the discovery of our duty, and sometimes reveals the Gospel in the riches of its grace, for the faith and salvation of awakened sinners.

How

How firm and durable is the ancient and perfect law of God, which requires perfect, constant, and persevering obedience? It is an eternal law: It is not yet abolished, though the Gospel be introduced, nor shall it be through all the ages of mankind, and the several dispensations of God toward men. The moral law is sometimes said to be a transcript or copy from the nature and attributes of God; the duties there required bear the more perfect stamp and signature of his essential perfections, and therefore the law must be unchangeable.

And not only the requirements of duty, but I think the sanctions of the law also in its promised rewards and threatened penalties are everlasting. "He that doth these commandments perfectly shall live in, or by them:" But "Curfed is he that continueth not in all the commands of the law to do them," and he must die, Gal. iii. 10, 12. I do not find any scripture that tells me, that the commands, or the sanctions are repealed\*, though  
God

\* If it should be said, that the Apostle in Heb. vii. 18 says, "There is verily a disannulling of the commandment for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, for the Law made nothing perfect," &c. I answer, that the context plainly shews that the words *Law* and *Commandment* here, do not mean the Moral Law, but refer either to the Sinai Covenant, or the whole scheme of the Jewish Oeconomy, and particularly to the Levitical Priesthood, which is abrogated, because it could not make a proper atonement for sin.

If it should be objected yet again, that the same Apostle in Rom. vii. 6. declares, that "we are now delivered from the Law, that being dead in which we were held;" and that the Law in this place means the Ten Commandments, because the Apostle argues from the tenth command, "Thou shalt not covet:" I answer that the Apostle there plainly means, that now under the Gospel we who are true Christians, and are entered into the Covenant of Grace by faith, are delivered from the  
bondage

God hath provided a way to deliver men who receive the Gospel, and enter into God's new covenant from the bondage of the law as a covenant of works, and to release and free repenting sinners from this cursed death, to deliver them from this sentence of condemnation, and to bestow on them the blessings of eternal life.

It is granted indeed, as the Apostle confesses, Rom. viii. 3, That "through the weakness of our flesh the law is become weak," and unable to save sinners; because their corrupt nature and fleshly inclinations render them unable to keep it perfectly; but, as I intimated before, it is not weak in its own nature to give life. Christ in my text preaches the law, and says, "If thou keep the commandments," with a persevering constancy, and a sinless perfection, "thou shalt enter into life:" What Christ speaks is true. If any man appear who hath been guilty of no sin, and hath fulfilled the law of God in every tittle of it in

bondage and chains of the Law as a Covenant of Works, whereby our indwelling sins were rather irritated and provoked than subdued: *It is dead*, i. e. it has lost its unhappy influences on true believers: But not that the Law itself is abolished, either as a rule of life to Christians, or as a condemning Covenant of Works to those who are not entered into the New Covenant or a State of Grace, by repentance and faith: For he adds, verse 12, that even now the Law is holy, and the Commandment, holy, and just, and good.

If this might be explained by a similitude, I think it is much in the same manner as the Penal Laws against the Protestant Dissenters in England, are not abolished, but stand in force still: Yet they have no power to hurt any person who accepts of the Act of Toleration, and qualifies himself accordingly: Tho' indeed there is this difference, that it can never be said that those Penal Laws are now, or ever were either holy, just, or good, as the Law of God is.

thought,

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thought, word, and deed, he shall have eternal happiness. Rom. ii. 7, "They who seek for glory, honour and immortality, by patient continuance in well doing" (*is logw ayabw*, in one good work, without intermission or interruption by any sin) "they shall have eternal life." This is the language of the law of works. But our incapacity to fulfil this law in our fallen state, hath awakened the compassion of God to provide a Gospel of grace, and to send his Son Jesus Christ down from heaven to earth for this very purpose, that humble, repenting, returning sinners, who trust in the mercy of God thro' a Mediator, might be saved, even while they cannot fulfil the perfect demands of this pure and holy Law, though they sincerely endeavour it.

The great and blessed God maintains his holy Law still in its own perfection and glory, though we have lost our practical or moral power of obeying it perfectly: I say, we have lost, by our fall in Adam, our moral or practical power of perfect obedience to the Law; but our natural powers of understanding, will and affections remain, and there is no other natural power or faculty required, in order to obey it. And since our natural powers remain, the great God requires perfect obedience of us to his holy Law, and yet he assures us by his Gospel, that he will not inflict the curse of the Law on those who heartily repent of their sins, and trust in Christ, though they do not or cannot yield perfect obedience to this Law.

He doth not lessen or diminish the demands of his Law, which requires perfection still; for his nature is too pure to require only an imperfect obedience: If God under the Gospel, had quite laid aside, or abolished his Law, and required no more than such a sincere imperfect obedience, or such good works which converted and pious men perform, then they would fulfil the requirements



122 The true Use of the MORAL LAW III. § 1.  
of God, and would have no sin, and such persons  
would need no pardon. But this is contrary to  
the whole tenor of the New Testament. "If we  
say we have no sin, we make God a liar, we de-  
ceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," 1 John  
i. 10. The Law of God is eternal, and demands  
perfect obedience of every creature: But his Grace  
pardons those who cannot come up to the perfect  
demands of this Law, by reason of the moral im-  
potence contracted by the fall, if they apply them-  
selves to Jesus Christ his Son, according to the  
rules of the Gospel.

The Law therefore is holy, and just, and good,  
and will be so to all generations, Rom. vii. 12,  
and when our Saviour was beginning his divine  
and admirable exposition of it on the Mount, he  
warns us in Matt. v. 17, 18. "Think not I am  
come to destroy the Law and the Prophets: I am  
not come to destroy but to fulfil: for verily I say  
unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or  
one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till  
all be fulfilled;" and our Lord Jesus Christ has put  
honour upon his Father's Law several ways.

1. He preached and explained it in the glorious  
purity and perfection of it.

2. He fulfilled it all himself in the most exact  
obedience, and thereby set all his followers an ad-  
mirable example how to fulfil it.

3. He suffered death for the dishonour we had  
cast upon it by our sins, not to destroy the sanction  
of it, but to free us from the curse.

4. He hath taken all the commandments of it  
into the scheme of his Gospel, as divine rules and  
directions for the constant practice of believers,  
and obliges them to obey it with their utmost care  
and endeavour, though he hath taken away from  
them that curse and condemnation, which originally  
belongs to every degree of disobedience.

5. He

5. He sends his Holy Spirit to write this Law in the hearts of his people, and to form their souls to a delightful conformity to the rules of it.

Thus it appears, that Christ Jesus himself and the very scheme of the Gospel doth confirm and not abolish the Law, Rom. iii. 31. The Law is everlasting, and the Gospel doth not destroy it, while yet it relieves guilty creatures from the deserved penalties.

How useful is it to meditate and study, to preach and explain the Law of God, and that not only for the direction of our life and actions, but also for the same end that our Saviour preached it in my text to this young man, (viz.) to convince of sin. So Rom. iii. 20, "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. iv. 15, "The Law worketh wrath;" it sheweth to the consciences of men the wrath of God, which is due to sin, and therefore saith the Apostle, "I by the Law am dead to the Law," Gal. ii. 16, 19. By considering and studying the purity, the extent, and perfection of the Law of God, I am dead to all expectation of righteousness and life by it, for I see I cannot fulfil its pure and perfect demands, and therefore I fly to the Gospel as my only refuge and hope.

We must be made sensible of our guilt of sin, our liableness to death and misery, and our incapacity to save ourselves by the Law, that we may fly to the Gospel of Grace. We must be wounded by the Law that we may seek and find healing by the Gospel. The Law imprest on the conscience is an excellent preparative for the Gospel of forgiveness; for sinners that are not awakened to a sense of sin and danger, will not hear the sweet invitations of the Saviour. Dare not charge and censure those as legal preachers, who frequently preach the Law of God in its demands and in its curses: There is abundant use of preaching the

124 The true Use of the MORAL LAW III. § I.  
Law, for many excellent purposes under the dispensation of the Gospel: Jesus himself is our pattern.

How happy are we who live under the clear and complete light of the Gospel, as it is explained and illustrated by the inspired Apostles, since the death and resurrection of our blessed Saviour. We are happier in several respects, than those that lived even in the life-time of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are ready to say within ourselves, Surely if I had seen Christ in the flesh, I must have loved him: If I had beheld his pure and perfect example of holiness, I could not help imitating: If I had heard him speak as never man spake, I must have embraced his doctrine, and submitted to his instructions: But we are much mistaken in this thought, for we might have been carried away from Christ by the common national prejudices against him, we might have been among the proud Pharisees, building up a righteousness of our own, and refusing the Gospel, while we heard Jesus himself preach it. Multitudes who heard this glorious preacher rejected his divine counsels, and perished in their unbelief and disobedience, though they had as good an opinion of themselves as we have.

Besides many other advantages that we have now, beyond what they had in the days of Christ; besides the many predictions and promises that are since accomplished, which confirm his mission; the explication of a greater part of the Old Testament, by the Apostles, than could have been done before the death of Christ; the many proofs of the Christian religion, which we derive from the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the arguments drawn from the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which could never have been brought in our Saviour's life-time, we have this advantage also among others,

others, that we have the Gospel set in a clearer light by his Apostles, in their sermons and epistles, than our Saviour himself set it in, by his own personal ministry.

That Divine Teacher explained the Law clearly, and set the commands of it in their full light and beauty, partly to lead us to a more spiritual practice than the Pharisees and the Jewish Doctors of the Law were acquainted with, and partly to shew our utter incapacity of keeping the Law, or obtaining eternal life by it: He also began to publish the Gospel of Grace, repentance and forgiveness; but his sovereign wisdom did not think proper publicly to explain and illustrate this Gospel of forgiveness with the doctrine of his own sacrifice, his death, his atonement for our sins, his resurrection for our justification, his intercession for us in heaven, and his ruling the world for the good of his people: He left all this to be done by his Apostles, when the Spirit should come down upon them and teach them many things which they could not bear in his life-time, and which therefore he did not clearly teach them, John xvi. 12.

Value therefore and love the Gospel, and return not to the law of works, as the means of your justification. Gal. iv. 21, "Tell me ye that desire to be under the Law, do ye not hear the Law," how it curses every sinner, and condemns them all without remedy and without hope? It is the business of sinners to fly to and live upon this Gospel of forgiveness, and not seek to establish their own imperfect righteousness before God. Rejoice in the way of justification by the obedience, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. Never hope to obtain pardon of sin, and to secure the salvation which Christ has revealed, by your own keeping the commandments of the Law, for your best righteousnesses are all very defective and insufficient: But repent of sin, trust in Christ, and live



upon atoning blood and pardoning grace, while you humbly seek after the highest degrees of holiness and conformity to the commands of the Law. By this means you shall magnify the Law of God, and make it honourable in the sight of men, even while your hope of salvation and eternal life is entirely owing to the rich Grace of God in the Gospel of his Son Jesus : To him that has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, to him that has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, by being made a curse and a sacrifice for us, be glory, honour, and dominion, for ever and ever, Amen.

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## E S S A Y IV.

The MISTAKEN WAYS of coming to GOD  
without CHRIST.

JOHN xiv. 6.

*No man cometh to the Father but by me.*

**I**F the race of man were immortal on earth, and sinners were never summoned to die, or if they could put an eternal end to their souls when the body lies down in the dust, there would be little concern among us, How shall I come and appear before God? or What shall I do to obtain his favour? Sinful creatures seem to live well enough among the cares or amusements of this life, though they are without God in the world; and if they could live for ever without seeing him, or could plunge into death and the unseen world, and not meet him there, they would take no thought about that grand enquiry, which Balak the king of Moab thought to be of such importance, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, or bow myself before the high God?”

But

But when the consciences of men begin to be convinced that they are transgressors of the Law of God, and that they must one day appear before him, as their Governor and their Judge, and answer for their conduct, then they enquire in good earnest, What they shall do to stand in his sight with acceptance, or to draw near his Majesty without terror? Then reason and nature exert all their forces to find an answer to this grand question.

But nature and reason darkened and weakened by the fall of man, and unassisted by revelation and divine grace, lead them into many mistaken ways, such as will never bring them into the favour of him who made them, nor obtain true happiness. Poor foolish and fallen mankind is ready to try many means of procuring eternal life for themselves, before they will betake themselves to the one only way which God hath appointed by his Gospel, and that is, *Faith in Jesus Christ*.

Of the several mistaken ways that sinners are ready to chuse in this case, these three are the chief, the way of supposed innocency, the way of dependence on God's general goodness, and the way of their own repentance and self-righteousness. Let us consider each of these, and enquire into the justness of their pretensions.

First, The way of innocency. How many souls are there in such a land as this, who come to God with a thoughtless confidence, and expect to find mercy at his hands, though they are conscious they have not done so much good as they ought, nor have been so religious as they should be? Yet they think they are harmless, and have done no wrong, and therefore they are safe for eternity. Perhaps, by education and other methods of restraining grace, they have escaped the viler pollutions of the age, and been preserved from gross impieties: Then they hope and believe all shall go well with

them, and dream of nothing but the favour of God, and happiness after death, because their life has been outwardly unblameable in the world. Thus they live, and thus they die.

Ask these persons when they lie languishing on a dying pillow, "How they can venture to appear before the great, the just, and the holy God, in the world of spirits?" They will readily return this answer, They have done no harm, and they hope God will do them none; they have wronged no man, and they know not why they should not be accepted of God. Poor ignorant, unthinking creatures! One would wonder that so gross blindness and stupidity should remain on the minds of any who sit under the preaching of the Law and Gospel. Let me endeavour to convince such sinners here, and prove that this hope is a false and dangerous one.

1. If it were possible that they should be found such as they suppose themselves, that is, innocent in their outward actions toward their fellow creatures, yet have their language and their lips been always innocent too? Or if they have in the main learnt to bridle their tongues from gross falsehood, and wrath, and slander, yet have they never indulged evil imaginations against their neighbour, and the working of evil passions? If we construe the law of duty to extend to our hearts, as well as to our lips and our lives, as our Saviour has construed it in his Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5th, and 6th, and 7th, who is there that can ever plead innocence?

You have kept your actions to all appearance tolerably blameless, with regard to men, but have you never broken the last command of the second table, never been desirous of another's possessions in thought, never been guilty of immorality in heart? Can such souls plead at the bar of God, that they never allowed one envious thought

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thought against their neighbour, and never let loose a malicious word? That they never coveted that which belonged to another, nor wilfully lessened their neighbour's good name or reputation? Did they never find wrath or revenge kindling and burning within them without resistance? Did they never indulge the motions of lust or intemperance, or any sinful desire stirring in their hearts? When the great Apostle, in the second and third chapters to the Romans, is convincing all the world of sin, and laying mankind under a sense of guilt, he convinces them effectually by their breach of the second table, that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Rom. ii. 21, and iii. 10, 12—14, &c.

Where is the son or daughter of Adam that can stand forth and say, I never dishonoured father or mother, nor ever disobeyed the just commands of my superiors; I never was unreasonably angry against another; I never encouraged a wanton thought within me, nor indulged any covetous or sinful wish; I never broke the rule of temperance in eating and drinking, nor ever gave way to an irregular passion. I never was guilty of known falshood in design or in word. Let mankind take but these laws of God, which regard themselves and their neighbours, and make a sincere examination of themselves thereby, and their own consciences will soon condemn the very best of them in the sight of God. They are all condemned by the law of innocence, and if they have no better plea, they will meet with an offended and angry God, in whose sight no sinner can stand and find acceptance. His law is wise and righteous, and every violation of it deserves a proportion of punishment.

Perhaps they will plead after such a strict enquiry, that though they have not been perfectly innocent, yet their offences have not been gross and



constant; but only of the smaller kind and few in number, and therefore they hope for mercy: But the Apostle James takes away this hope also, when he tells us, James ii. 8, 10, "Whoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," for by one wilful sin he abuses that Governor and affronts that authority by which all the commands are enjoined. Nor is any wilful sin small in the sight of Divine Justice, for it is the fruit of a presumptuous heart, and is therefore highly criminal.

But suppose after their own review of their behaviour, they should pronounce themselves quite innocent, and say boldly, "They know nothing by themselves;" yet they are not sufficiently justified hereby, for God sees the heart, and he knows us better than we know ourselves. 1 Cor. vii. 2, and 1 Cor. iv. 4. "Receive us," saith St. Paul, "we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man; for though I know nothing by myself," nothing of fraud or deceit, or wilful injury, "yet am I not hereby justified, but he that judgeth me is the Lord." The eyes of God are a flame of fire, and will find iniquity where I can find none, for he sees all the disguises and veils of self-love and self-flattery, whereby every man is naturally prone to cover his sins, and to impose upon himself. He beholds those secret ferments, those hidden operations and motions of sin in the soul, which pass by unnoticed by ourselves, and escape the accusation and charge of our consciences. He knows so perfectly all the just demands of his own law, in the lengths and the breadths thereof, and is so perfectly acquainted with all the motions of our hearts, all their follies and passions, and sinful biasses, that he can find in us a thousand contrarieties to his law, where we are fondly ready to presume upon our own innocence. Should I say with Job, chap. ix. ver. 30,

"If

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“ If I should wash myself in snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, thou wilt plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes would abhor me.” If I should use all my own purifications, thou wilt discover me to be still as greatly defiled with sin, as one who is plunged into a ditch, and is unfit to put on his common raiment, lest he defile that and every thing about him.

Alas, how little do men believe this? How little do they know and think of their own guilt in the sight of God, and the depth of their own misery? How are they led by their own thoughtlessness and shameful ignorance of themselves to build their hopes for eternity on a very sandy foundation, which will never stand in the day of that divine tempest, which shall try every man's work?

You imagine, God will not be so strict a Judge, and so severe, as preachers represent him; but how do you know that he will not be thus severe in his enquiries, and his judgment? I am well assured the mere light of nature can never assure you of it, nor secure you against this severity: And the Scripture often represents him thus severe in his judgment, formed by the rules of his own law, and abstracted from the Gospel of his Grace. David knew this in ancient times, Psal. cxxx. 3, and cxliiii. “ If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities; O Lord, who can stand? No man living shall be justified in thy sight.” All mankind are sinners; “ There is none righteous; no, not one: Every mouth is stopped, and the whole world lies guilty before God,” Rom. iii. 19.

2. If we were entirely innocent as to man, would that be sufficient to answer for all our injuries and dishonours done to God? Would this honest and blameless conduct among your neighbours, atone for all your neglects of religion, and your shameful forgetfulness of God your Maker?

What! Did God send you into this world among sensible things, and give you leave to neglect him, who is the Eternal and the Almighty Spirit? Did he form your spirits within you, and give you understanding and reason, and noble powers to know the God that made you, and never require or expect that you should use them to obtain this knowledge? Have you a tongue to speak, and yet never speak to him in petition or praise? It is not only cruelty, or falsehood, or injustice to our neighbours, which the holy Apostle charges mankind with, in order to lay their consciences under guilt and condemnation, but their neglects of God and religion are brought in as a heavy part of the charge. Rom. iii. 11, 17, 18, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God; there is no fear of God before their eyes." You hear the accusations of this Apostle, speaking in the name of God to men, to make them sensible of their guilt and misery; you have defrauded the great God of his due glory; you have done him much injury in withholding from him worship and reverence, fear and love, prayer and praise; and you fall under the sentence of his broken law for ever, if you have no better plea than this.

Under such a charge multitudes would be ready to rise up, and with a thoughtless and inconsiderate pertness would say, "Far be it from us to injure our Maker when we would not injure or wrong a worm." And this is the common sentiment and language of neighbours and friends when a man dies, even though he were a drunkard or a man of irreligion. "Alas, for him! Poor man! He has been honest and just; his soul is at rest, he never did any body an injury but himself." When such sinners are charged with neglect of religion, they cry out as though they were falsely accused, as those Jews do in Mal. iii. 8. When God complains of them, "Ye have robbed me, saith the Lord;"

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Lord ;" but they replied with impudence and ignorance, " Wherein have we robbed or wronged thee ? "

Alas, you are far from innocence in this respect ; for you have robbed God of your hearts and best affections ; you have robbed him of your thoughts and serious meditations ; you have robbed him of your highest love and chief delight. Were all the passions of your souls and powers of nature given you to be employed about the trifles of this world ? Doth not God, in the person of Divine Wisdom, call to men in the book of Proverbs, " My son, give me thy heart ? " And hath not the world had these hearts of yours given up to it entirely ? Doth not the light of nature, as well as our Saviour say, " Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and your whole soul, with all your mind, and all your strength ? " And hath God had all this share of love from you ?

What time have you ever spent in his service, in secret transactions between God and your own souls ? What seasons have you taken for prayer to him, or for speaking his honours ? And yet our time is all his : And though he gives us sufficient portions of time for all our necessities and conveniences of life, yet have you not robbed God of much of your time in neglecting religion so entirely as you have done ? Have you lived upon the Lord as your delight and your life ? Have you made him your hope and your all ? Have you daily expected all your comforts and blessings from him, and have you returned all the fruits of your blessings back again to him in a way of thankfulness and obedience ? Surely your consciences must answer, No : Then believe it and be afraid ; you have robbed God, you have injured the Almighty, you are far from innocency, and you must expect to perish with malefactors, if you have no better plea than this.

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O dismal change of apprehensions; when God shall make creatures, who thought they were innocent, appear abominable in his sight, guilty of atheism and irreligion and high ungodliness, and shall judge and sentence and punish them as criminals of a deep dye, for God was not in all their thoughts, they lived without God in the world.

Dare not therefore, O sinners, dare not continue one day longer in this practice: Renounce and abandon your false and foolish hopes: Walk no longer in this vain, this dangerous, this supposed way of innocency, for it will never bring you to God and his favour. Nor go on to think yourself fit for heaven, because you imagined you had done no wrong on earth, for upon a serious search you must be convinced in your consciences; that you have been evident transgressors of the law of God, both in regard of the duties of religion and morality, in what you owe both to God and man; and innocency will be found a false and vain plea at the bar of God.

But I will go one step further in making it appear with abundant evidence, that the way of pretended innocency can never bring such creatures as we are into the favour of God; and that is, by enquiring of such as call themselves Christians; what is the use of Christianity, and why was it brought into the world? Surely, if innocence had been the way to heaven, Christ Jesus the Son of God would never have come into flesh and blood, that he might die for us; God would never have sent so glorious and divine a person to have exposed himself to so many infirmities and sorrows, fatigues and sufferings among the wretched inhabitants of this our globe, if we could have been saved in the way of innocence. Never would the Son of God have entered our world to have been driven out of this mortal life again by cruel and bloody men; nor sustained the shame, the pangs and agonies of  
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the cross, and a cursed death. There would have been no new religion introduced by him; there would have been no Gospel, for their needed none if we are saved by innocence. The coming of the Son of God into our world, his painful circumstances of life, and his atoning death at the end of them, sufficiently prove that the law of innocency can never save mankind.

The covenant or law of innocence was broken by our first parents; our nature is corrupted, and this law or covenant is for ever weak, and unable to bring us to God again. Rom. viii. 3, "What the law was not able to do in that it was weak thro' the flesh, Jesus Christ came to do for us," by coming in the flesh, and making his soul an offering for sin.

If after all this representation of things you are resolved to continue in this way, and seek eternal life in the way of innocence, you give a sensible affront to the Son of God, who came down from heaven to bring sinners near to God, and you say in effect, He might have spared his journey to earth to shew us the way to heaven, or to provide a new way for us, for we have done no harm to God or man here in this world, and therefore God will not condemn or hurt us in the other. O my friends, beg of God to convince you deeply of sin, and that there is no hope by all your pretences of this kind.

The second mistaken way of coming to God is by a mere dependance on the absolute goodness of his nature, while you neglect the particular methods of salvation which you hear and read he has appointed in the book of his Grace. It is true, "his tender mercies are over all his works," and men imagine this eternal love to his creatures will not suffer him to make any of them miserable hereafter, for what they call a little misconduct here: And while they lessen their own sins, and  
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enlarge upon his goodness, they venture their souls upon an unsafe foundation, and build up a dangerous and ungrounded hope. Fancy his goodness, O sinners, as large and glorious as you will, and I may venture to affirm it yet larger and more glorious than your fancy; but if all your hopes rest here, and you walk onward in this confidence, you will never see the face of God with comfort; nor arrive at his favour. Remember this is spoken particularly, and only to those who have known and heard the Gospel of Christ, and yet have neglected to receive it.

Yet how common a mistake is this, even among those who are called by the Christian name? Many will confess, "We are sinners indeed, and so are all men; but God is infinitely merciful, and he will not damn us: Surely he will never condemn so many millions of souls; he did not make mankind to destroy them; his goodness will not bear to see us eternally miserable, and therefore though we do indulge a little sin here, we shall not perish for ever." Thus that very sin is committed, which the Apostle warns men of, Rom. ii. 4, "The riches of the goodness and forbearance and long-suffering of God which should lead men to repentance," are abused to indulge and uphold them in sin. It is a shameful indignity and dishonour done to the goodness of God, to pretend to trust to it for salvation from punishment, and yet neglect the means this very goodness hath appointed to obtain it. But I will endeavour to convince you here, that this is not a safe way.

1. Infinite goodness doth not save sinning angels, and why should it save sinning men? These noble creatures, who sinned against God, and left their first station, are for ever damned and miserable, and yet God is for ever good: How largely is his goodness diffused thro' all the heavenly world, and he receives endless hallelujahs for it; how largely

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on this earth, though we often overlook it, and neglect his praise : But he is not bound to exercise goodness in hell too ; nor is his heart to be charged with hardness, nor his hand with shortness, because he will not save those who deserve destruction.

2. Though the goodness of God be infinite in its nature, yet its exercises are all regulated and limited by infinite wisdom and justice. Wisdom hath joined with divine goodness, and saved a multitude of sinners ; but is it bound to save them all ? Or is it obliged to save you ? Terrible majesty, holiness, and consuming fire, are with our God ; and among rebellious creatures, his wisdom finds proper seasons and objects where these must have their exercise : And if you are sinners, why should not his just vengeance be let out upon you ? It is a dreadful word which is written, *Isai. xxvii. 11*, " This is a people of no understanding ; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour " Those who are so ignorant of God and his way of salvation in the midst of the brightest means of knowledge, deserve destruction from the Almighty, as the fool who says in his heart, " There is no God."

3. There is no promise in the Gospel made to those that rest on infinite goodness, and refuse the means God has ordained to salvation, i. e. Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Goodness, when it is not bound by a promise is perfectly free : And, indeed, if it were confined always to act to the utmost of its reach, it were not free, nor divine, nor worthy of God. And where there is no divine faithfulness engaged to support you by a promise, a sinner's hope in goodness itself will not be a sufficient and effectual security.

4. Though the goodness of God is infinite, yet it doth not express itself in all the ways that it can

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do in temporal things, and why must it then be exercised in so unbounded a manner in things eternal? If Divine Goodness exerted itself to the utmost in this life, there would be no pain, there would be no sickness among men, no heart-ache, no sorrow: But you see there is much sickness, sorrow and pain among us, notwithstanding the boundless goodness of God. There are ten thousand ways for Infinite Goodness to express itself in, besides in forgiveness of the sins of men.

How do you know that God will forgive any one sinner, or bestow upon him eternal life? The light of nature cannot assure us of it, much less can it inform us, that a God of infinite goodness will pardon every sinner, or save them from the punishment which is due by his righteous law. And I am well assured the Scripture gives us no such general hope: Thousands will be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord Jesus, and from the glory of his power," notwithstanding his own and his Father's unsearchable treasures of grace and goodness. The Lord is abundant in goodness, and yet earth and hell abound with miserable creatures.

5. Although you could prove that the mercy of God will pardon some sinners, yet how can you be sure it will pardon you? If you were told, that it will save a million of transgressors, yet can you prove that it will save you? Nay, as highly sovereign as you fancy it to be, you may be still excluded from the exercise of it; for you may as well imagine this to be one instance of sovereignty, to forgive thousands, and yet punish you, if you have nothing else to plead but his mere goodness. Now it is not wise to venture so important an interest as that of an immortal soul upon any uncertainty whatsoever, if it can be avoided; and according to your own principle of dependance on sovereign mercy, you are left at a dreadful uncertainty, if  
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you have nothing else to trust to but the mere sovereignty of Divine Goodness.

6. You have over and over again, by repeated sins, forfeited all pretences to the favour and mercy of God: Whatsoever ground you have had to hope in his goodness, yet you have cut off all those grounds by your frequent actual iniquities. Let us enter into particulars, and survey a little what claims you have to trust in this absolute goodness of God.

(1.) Will you say, You are his creature and he is your Maker and owner, therefore you trust him to save what is his own? But remember that every sin of yours has disowned his dominion, violated his authority, and forfeited his love and all his kind regards, as a Creator and Proprietor.

(2.) Will you plead, You have obeyed him, and done much service for him, and therefore you hope his goodness will reward you? But have you not done more against him? Surely your sins are more than your acts of piety, and they cancel all pretended obligations you could hope to lay upon God. I fear, should all our virtues and devotions be put into the scale against our vices, they would be found greatly wanting in the weight.

(3.) Will you add this plea, You are in a miserable state, and you trust in his compassion that he will not leave poor sinful wretched beings in a state of misery? But have you not affronted him since your miseries began, and sinned against him, even in your bonds? And is not his compassion thereby utterly forfeited? Besides might not fallen angels make the same plea as you do? Are they not in great misery? And yet are they not bound in chains of darkness, because of their sins, and shut up to further vengeance.

O see what an uncertain foundation your souls lean upon, when you venture to trust in the mere mercy of God, and his goodness, without his Gospel.

pel. It is a goodness sovereign and absolutely free, and therefore not bound to save such wretches as you from misery: It is a goodness that can see sinning angels perish for ever, and not help them: It is a goodness that is regulated in its exercises, by infinite wisdom and righteousness, and the authority and justice of a divine Governor, and these must have their proper exercises too: It is absolute goodness without a promise, without engagement; goodness that has ten thousand ways to exercise itself besides in forgiving criminals: It is a goodness that may forgive ten thousand sinners, and not forgive you; and it is a goodness too, that you have so often dishonoured, whose favours you have so shamefully forfeited and abused. Stand and wonder then that it is not turned into fury against you long ago, without change and without hope.

Surely since I have a soul of immortal duration, I will strive to have better rest and support for it than this, and never venture it here, since there is a stronger and better hope. Ye holy and happy souls that have learnt the new and living way of coming to the Father, bless him, that he has not left you to seek all your salvation from absolute and unpromised goodness: Bless him that has bound his goodness by many a kind promise to you in his Gospel, and sealed it with the blood of his own Son.

We proceed now to consider the third false or mistaken way of coming to God, and that is by self-righteousness: For when we are made sensible that none is innocent, and the goodness of God in general is not sufficient ground enough to raise and support a solid hope, then we are ready to offer something of our own to God, to engage this general goodness of his on our side, and make our righteousness the way to procure divine favour, expecting that God should exercise and express his goodness towards us, in the blessings of pardon and salvation.

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salvation. This self-righteousness may be divided into four sorts.

1. Penances and mortifications, sorrow and regret of soul, with all our own fancied atonements for sin.

2. Works of charity to the poor.

3. Forms of religious worship.

4. Outward reformation with vows and labour after better obedience.

1. Penances and mortifications, and our own remorse of conscience and regret of soul, together with many fancied atonements for sin: Thus the heathens, ancient and modern. What tortures have some of them inflicted on themselves for the expiation of their own sins, or the sins of their country? So great and powerful hath been their sense of the guilt of sin, that large sacrifices, and dreadful ones too, have been proposed by some of them for this purpose, (Micah vi. 6, 7) "Thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil," and some of them have actually offered their "first born for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls."

The Gentiles, when they are a little considerate, one would think, must acknowledge God to be the governor of the world, and that he is a great and dreadful God, who has, in very visible instances, sometimes manifested his displeasure against the sins of men, and revealed his wrath from heaven against their unrighteousness and ungodliness: And under the fear and terror of his vengeance they have sometimes put on sackcloth and lived in ashes: They have denied themselves the common food of nature, and half famished their bodies with abstinence. So the Ninevites did at the threatening of the Lord by Jonah the prophet. Sometimes they have banished themselves from towns and cities, and all converse with men, into mere deserts and caves of the earth, and strained their limbs



limbs in painful postures, for years together, to make atonement for the sins of the people; so some of the pretended saints in the East-Indies have done. They have put themselves in iron cages, with sharp spikes, to be carried about and wounded from head to foot, as some of the Bonzes in China; they have thrown themselves under a heavy loaden chariot of their huge images and idols, and been crushed to death, as some of their holy men in Malabar. But what hath all this availed to obtain the favour of that God whom they have offended? Who hath required this at their hands? And what ground have they to think God will accept it?

So also those of the Roman church, who are fallen from the doctrine that St. Paul once wrote to the Romans, have invented various penances, and endeavoured to come into the favour of God by them: As though lashing themselves with cords, could satisfy infinite justice for their crimes, and wearing sackcloth on their flesh, could make their polluted souls pure and acceptable to God. In following ages, when the priests were grown more crafty and covetous, they taught them to come to God by money, and to buy pardons for sin and titles to heaven of the Pope. This was called a commutation of penance, and making their purse suffer instead of their flesh; and thus they compounded with the justice of God for the sins of their souls. They lavish away much silver and gold, to make atonement before God for breaking his law. Poor attempts and hopeless pretences to remove the displeasure of God, and make a way for their favourable access to him! There have been some austere persons that have separated themselves from the lawful customs of the world, and common comforts of life, in order to appease their consciences for past indulgence and sensuality, as though God and his holiness, and his governing wisdom

wisdom and majesty, would be as easily satisfied as their blinded consciences.

Others again after sin are terrified with fears of death and destruction, and under these impressions they seem to mourn for their sins, and then fly to their repentances and tears to save them; though perhaps their repentance and regret of conscience carries no more hatred of sin in it than Judas had, who hanged himself for inward vexation and anguish of soul.

But if this repentance were ever so sincere, is the great God obliged to pardon such repeated crimes as ours are, merely because the criminal repents? Do the princes of the earth think it necessary to forgive every rebel and traitor, because he is sorry he has been guilty of treason and exposed himself to punishment? Why then should the King of Kings be bound to let every criminal pass without being punished, merely because he repents of his wickedness? It will be said perhaps, we have nothing better to offer than our repentance. And what then? Must a poor rebel be always pardoned because he has nothing to make satisfaction to his injured sovereign, besides his own tears? And yet there are too many who still will hope that their sins are washed away, and their guilt atoned for, by their sorrows and repentances; and some Christian ministers have expressed themselves a little too grossly and unwarily on this point.

O let us have a care of such mistakes, and bless the Lord, that he hath taught us a better laver than our own tears, a more powerful atonement than any of our sorrows. The pollutions of the soul by sin require a better cleansing, and affronts to the Majesty of Heaven demand a higher satisfaction than any that we can make with our utmost efforts of this kind.

2. Others fly to works of charity to the poor, or of supposed piety towards God, performed either in life or at death. Hence arise some extraordinary appearances of liberality in the world. This hope of making some compensation for sin, lays the foundation of churches and hospitals: And magnificent structures arise upon the earth to gain the favour of the God of heaven, who hath been provoked by former iniquities. Whole estates are sometimes given away by old sinners, and alienated from their natural heirs and possessors, even from needy friends and kindred, and are devoted to religious and charitable uses, in order to purchase salvation for their souls.

If they are Protestants we can hardly suppose they have these actual reasonings within themselves, as to infer, that God will be so much pleased with these legacies, as to pardon their sins for the sake of such a liberality to the church or the poor; this is the Popish doctrine of merit, which as Protestants we all renounce. But still there is a secret working of this self-righteousness in the hearts of many: And when upon a death-bed they bequeath large legacies to the service of God, or the relief of the poor, they hope to breathe out their spirit comfortably into the hand of God the Father, with some dependance on the legacies, at least as sufficient evidences of their love to God, and with confident expectation of obtaining his salvation.

But alas! what can a little charity to the poor do toward the reconciliation of God to an offending creature? Is there any force in this reasoning, because I do a kindness for a fellow-worm, therefore my Maker must love me, and forgive me all affronts against him? Or because I have given to the service of God some of those worldly good things which he first bestowed upon me, therefore he

he must pardon all my former iniquities, he must receive me for ever into his favour, and confer upon me the riches of glory, and the inheritance of the saints in light? How weak are these reasonings? And yet how many have been ready to lay the stress of their hopes upon them, having nothing else within their view to trust in?

3. Forms and observances of religious worship, are another vain pillar upon which sinners lean and support themselves. This is a most common and powerful deceit. How many thousands are there, that by daily attendance upon solemnities of worship and coming up to the house of God, hope at last to come to the arms of the Father with acceptance? And especially if they have practised secret devotion too, in the common forms of it, and have frequently bowed their knees to God in their retirements, their hope has risen high; and though they have not arrived at a thorough change of heart, and sincere love to God, yet they will presume upon his acceptance without any great concern about the salvation of Jesus Christ.

But let me ask such sort of candidates for heaven and happiness, whether a formal round of duties, without the heart being in them, without sincere love to God and delight in him, can so far please the blessed God, as to persuade him to neglect all the righteous demands of his governing justice for past crimes? Or if your hearts are sometimes engaged in these solemnities, is this sufficient to cancel all former transgressions?

Besides, if you have no Mediator, who shall introduce such a sinner, or his duties, into the presence of God with acceptance? May he not justly drive us with all our solemn formalities, afar from his seat, since we neglect the only hope set before us, the name of his Son, without which no man shall come to be accepted of the Father.



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John xiv. 6, "No man cometh to the Father but by me."

4. The last thing I mention, on which some persons are prone to depend, in order to obtain forgiveness, is a course of outward reformation, and some vows and some endeavours after better obedience: But I would endeavour in these few particulars, to discover the vanity of all hopes of this kind.

(1.) Our duties are very imperfect: They do not in any degree answer the strict demands of the law and justice of God; and the best of them are so defective that they can never claim or pretend to any merit in them, since they do not come up to answer the requirements of God in his general rule of government.

(2.) Our obedience of to-day cannot wipe away or cancel the crimes of yesterday: These crimes stand like high and unpassable mountains in the way betwixt God and us. Paying a new debt never wipes off the old score among men, and why should we imagine it will do so before the throne of God?

(3.) Were our duties perfect, yet it is not only a guilty, but a worthless creature, a mere polluted worm performs them; and the eternal favour of an offended God is not to be purchased for rebel at so cheap a rate.

(4.) It is true, it is by duties of worship we must draw near to God, and by the acts of our mind and will, by knowledge, assent, faith, trust, hope, prayer and repentance, we must come to God; but it is still by and through the mediation and interest of Jesus the Son, that these acts of the soul must be addressed to the Father. These considered alone in themselves, are not prescribed in my text as the way itself, for "Christ is the way, the truth, and the life:" He is the only true and living

ing way to God. These actions performed with a due regard to Christ, are properly our walking in the way which God hath appointed; but if we have no regard to Christ in these actions, we are not walking in God's way, nor can we raise any solid hope that we shall arrive at his gracious presence, while we neglect or refuse the only way which God has ordained.

Perhaps some more intelligent or more conceited hearers, may cry out here, why are these rudiments and plain principles of Christianity preached to us? Surely we know better, and understand more of the Gospel of Christ, than to make such discourses necessary for us.

1. However learned some may be in these truths, yet perhaps there may be others coming continually into our assemblies, who know little enough either of the Law or Gospel; and they have need of the doctrines of their own guilt, and misery, and danger, to be spoken in very plain and clear language to them, before they will hearken and stand still, and consider their own circumstances, and their peril: And the nature of man when under the awakenings of conscience, is so prone to take hold of every false and feeble refuge, and to venture their eternal hopes upon them, that it is very necessary to speak these things often, and to represent them in the clearest light, in order to caution sinners against building their hopes on the sand, and resting all their expectation of the favour of God and happiness, upon some feeble foundation which will not bear them. It is not the wise and the learned that I pretend to instruct; but it is pity any poor soul, even of the lowest ranks of mankind, should abide ignorant of these important concerns, and should perish in such a land of light, and for want of Christian knowledge.

2. Let us search diligently our own hearts: Have we all attained and kept up such a due sense

of our danger without Christ as we should have? Are we never inclined to depend on self-righteousness at all? Are we never under any temptation to indulge this false hope? Some pious souls have complained of this temptation, and corrupt nature is very ready in the most of Christians, to build up some parts of their own righteousness as their sufficient refuge, and sometimes to put it in place of the perfect mediation and atonement of the blessed Jesus.

3. However the case be with us, and if we have got the victory over all temptations of this kind, yet it is very proper to remember what once we were, and reflect upon what false hopes we once were ready to build on, and to bless the Holy Spirit of Light and Grace, that hath discovered our mistakes unto us, that has turned our feet from every dangerous hope, and led us to the Father by the true and living way Christ Jesus.

Let this thought also call us to mourn over the souls of men, even the greatest part of our fellow creatures, inhabitants of this world, who are made of the same flesh and blood as we are, and who, through gross ignorance, are ever practising some foolish methods of pacifying God for past sins, and aiming at his favour and happiness in such ways as will never attain their end. O come, Lord Jesus, and spread thy light and thy truth through the dark nations, and scatter all the remaining mists and darkness that lie upon countries which have only the name of Christ, and some of the forms of his religion among them. Thousands there are, even in Europe, who neither know the Gospel in truth, nor come to God by this Mediator: They live not by the faith of the Son of God, nor have just reason, according to the Gospel, to expect divine favour and forgiveness. Blessed God, enlighten the thousands of dark and wretched mankind, and lead them in thine appointed way to happiness.

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I have been sometimes uneasy and ashamed to hear a divine of the Protestant Church, tell his people, that faith in Christ is a mysterious thing, and it is not to be well known, or clearly conceived in itself, but it may be much better conceived by its effects, therefore, saith he, I proceed, instead of speaking of faith itself, to give you an account of the fruits and effects of it.

As though there was any thing in the affairs of human life, in reason, or in religion, clearer than this notion, viz. Upon a sight and sense of our sin and danger, and our weakness to help ourselves, to commit ourselves into the hands of Christ, by an humble act of trust or dependance on him, complying with his appointed methods of relief in the Gospel.

It is but as a man sensible of his sickness applies himself to a wise and knowing physician, and gives himself up to him, and trusts himself in his hands to relieve him, complying with the remedies appointed in order to his cure.

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## ESSAY V.

A plain and easy ACCOUNT of a SINNER's coming to GOD by JESUS CHRIST, or of saving Faith in CHRIST JESUS.

JOHN xiv. 6.

*No man cometh to the Father but by me.*

**I**NNOCENT man, in the day of his creation, had a liberty of drawing near to God his Maker, and of delightful converse with him in a more immediate manner; but man having fallen from God, and becoming guilty in his person, and sinful in his nature, dwells in this world afar off from God; and yet sometimes would attempt to ap-



proach him, and obtain his favour again merely by his own powers and performances ; as though the goodness of God would receive him again into his presence, and into his love in the same manner as before. Sinful mankind have been often trying to make their way to God in and of themselves : Thence arise those various mistaken grounds of hope, of which we have given an account in the former discourse : But the blessed God has sufficiently informed us in his word, that it is in vain for us to hope to draw near to God, our offended Sovereign, without a Mediator ; and “ there is but one Mediator of God’s appointment between God and man, and that is the man Christ Jesus,” 1 Tim. ii. 5, and “ No man cometh to the Father but by him,” John xiv. 6.

Now in order to explain what it is for sinners to come to God the Father by Jesus Christ, let us consider that all saving approaches of the creature unto God, depend on God approaches to the creature : He first draws us by his grace, and then we follow. 1 John iv. 19, “ If we love him, it is because he first loved us.” If our souls are set a moving towards him, it is because his heart, his pity and his love, moved first towards us.

In the reconciliation of God and his sinful creatures, there must be a mutual approach, and a mutual nearness ; but it must be remembered, that a sinner’s coming nigh to God, is but an echo or answer to the merciful voice of God coming nigh to him : And the same method in which we may suppose the great God to draw near to sinners, the same steps should we take in drawing near to God.

It should be observed, that though the actions of the soul of man are generally produced in a successive way, yet sometimes two or three of these acts are so swift in the succession, and so nearly alike, or at the same moment, that they are blended together,

together, and are so interwoven in many cases, that it is hard to say, which is first, and which is last : And many times also, in one and the same act of the soul, there are such different views and designs concurring, as may make it look like two or three distinct actions : So, returning to God by Jesus Christ, includes in it both repentance, with all the acts contained therein, as well as faith, with all its subordinate motions : It is repentance, as it is a return to God ; it is faith, as Jesus Christ is the medium of this return. I put in this caution here, only to shew, that we are not to expect every single sinner that returns to God by Jesus Christ, must have all these particular motions of the soul, or all these transactions sensibly passing through his mind, and that in the same order as is here represented ; yet the representation of these things in some rational order, may greatly help the conception of the whole, and give persons a more clear and more distinct idea of it.

Let us then here take a survey of those several steps, whereby God may be supposed to draw near to fallen man, in order to his recovery, and thereby we shall learn what correspondent steps sinners must take, in order to their coming to God.

1. The blessed God surveying his lower creation, beheld all mankind as creatures in general fallen from his image and his love, and at a wide and dreadful distance from their Creator. Compare Psal. xiv. 2, 3, with Rom. iii. 9, 10, &c. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God : they are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy ; there is none that doth good, no, not one." This text of the Psalmist is cited by the Apostle in Rom. iii. 9, 10, &c. to prove that all mankind is afar off from God by nature ; and therefore I may justly use this Scripture, to prove that God beheld us in

this fallen state; he saw us lie under the righteous condemnation of his broken law, justly exposed to misery, and deserving his indignation and wrath, under a sentence of death, and yet still going farther from him without his fear or his love.

Now in correspondence with this view, which God has taken of the children of men, in their guilt and misery in general; we also, in order to our recovery, must be brought to see ourselves guilty and miserable, we must see ourselves destitute of the image and the love of God in our fallen state, if ever we would return to him by Christ.

God, who is essentially happy in being for ever near himself, and one with himself, has made the happiness of his creatures to depend on their being near to him, and their union with him; and he knows it is misery enough to be afar off from God: So must we be made deeply sensible of our wretchedness and misery in the loss of the favour and image of God, and in our dreadful state of distance and estrangedness from him. We must behold ourselves exposed to the wrath of God, and under sentence of condemnation and death, because of sin. We must see it so as to feel it, and be affected with it at our heart; we must have such an impression of it made upon our souls, so as never to be satisfied to continue in such a state, and be restless in seeking some way of recovery.

2. The great God surveying his own glorious perfections in himself, and the just rights of his government, taking a view also of the holiness, justice and wisdom of his law, which sinful man had grievously dishonoured and affronted by disobedience; he did not think it proper for himself as the Supreme Governor of the world, to receive sinful creatures into his favour again, without some signal honour done to his broken law and his authority; as a sort of righteous recompence for the affront

affront and dishonour done thereto by the offences of his creatures. It became the great GOD to make his law appear wise and just, by demanding such a reparation of the dishonour done to it.

But he found all mankind utterly incapable of making any such recompence, since all that they could do for time to come was but their known duty to their Creator, and none of their sufferings short of eternal death could make atonement or satisfaction for the sins that were past: And in this view of things the great GOD did, as it were, pronounce the recovery of his creature man, by all his own powers, altogether hopeless, and that his recovery must arise only from divine Grace.

In correspondence to this view of things in the eye of God, we should also set before our own eyes the holiness, justice, and wisdom of the law of our Creator, in order to make ourselves deeply sensible of our great guilt, in breaking his law, and our desert of death by the transgression of it: We should also be made sensible in some measure of the right of his divine authority and government to demand some satisfaction for our offences, before we be received into his favour again. The very workings of natural conscience under a sense of guilt, seem to be an impression from the God of nature on the mind of man, that sin deserves punishment, because the law of God broken, requires some reparation of honour.\*

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\* This is so universal in all ages among the considerate part of mankind, that the heathens themselves, in their own circumstances, thought a vindictive indignation of God would attend on sinners, Acts xxviii. 4. They thought St. Paul was a murderer, and therefore vengeance followed him. And this set them upon various and foolish inventions, to make atonement for sin: Nor is it to be supposed, that the craft of Priests alone, could so easily and so universally have imposed



- On this account we ought to reflect on ourselves as the more miserable and helpless in our guilty state, because we are utterly incapable to make any atonement for our own sins, or to repair the dishonour that hath been done to God's holy law and his authority thereby. We must look upon our circumstances therefore as hopeless in ourselves, and acknowledge that all our hope is in the grace and mercy of God. Every mouth must be stopped on this account, and all the world lie at the foot of God, as guilty before him, as justly exposed to his indignation, and unable to procure his favour.

3. The great God saw it also impossible to bring sinners near to himself, and make them partakers of his favour and happiness, without a change of their corrupt natures, an entire alteration of their vicious affections, and an universal turn of heart from sin to God. In our present fallen and sinful state, God beheld our hearts so averse to all that is holy and divine, that we could never be fit for converse with him, or the enjoyment of him as a God of holiness, without being renewed after his image and likeness, and possessed of a sincere love to him.

And he also beheld these guilty sinful creatures utterly incapable of recovering themselves to his image by a change of their nature, and by a thorough conversion of their hearts from sin, and the creature to God and holiness: So that this is ano-

on the nations their self-punishments, and their expensive sacrifices of atonement, if there had not been something in the natural consciences of mankind, which told them they wanted an atonement for sin. And in this respect the workings of natural conscience should be encouraged, and kept awake, and sensible of the wrath of God, which sin deserves, and that God will require some satisfaction to his injured Law and Government.

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ther obstacle in the sight of God to our reconciliation, and which we of ourselves cannot surmount.

In the same manner, in order to our recovery, we must look upon ourselves in our fallen state, as unfit for correspondence with God, incapable of enjoying happiness in his presence, by reason of the opposition of our will to his holiness, and to our duty, we must be sensible of the great carnality of our affections cleaving to earthly things, and to the tempting vanities of this life, chusing them for our portion and our happiness, instead of God.

And we must be acquainted also how weak and feeble all our own efforts are to work this mighty and universal change of nature in us, to form our spirits anew, and to rectify all the moral disorders in them: We must be made sensible how incapable we are of giving our souls a new bent and bias toward things divine and heavenly, instead of that sinful propensity which works in our nature, and is ever leading us astray from God and true happiness; so that if ever we are recovered, we must depend entirely upon the grace and mercy of God for our recovery; not only to provide a satisfaction for his own injured law and authority, but also to take away the perverseness and obstinacy of our wills, and to change our vile affections into holy and heavenly.

This is that poverty of spirit, that sensibility of our own helpless state, which is the first foundation of the kingdom of God within us. So our Saviour teaches, Matt. v. 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." This is that humility of soul which the men of Laodicea wanted, Rev. iii. 17. When they were really great sinners before God, they "supposed themselves rich, and increased in goods, and wanting nothing:" But before they were recovered it was necessary they should see "they were poor and blind, and wretched and naked."

4. Though God beheld mankind in these deplorable and helpless circumstances, yet he was pleased, out of his free Grace, to determine, that they should not perish. He resolved to bring them out of their state of distance from him, and to restore them to his favour and his image, to holiness and happiness. Whether this gracious will and design of God, be so clearly and sufficiently discovered, to the light of nature, in his providential goodness to all the world, I will not now debate: But it is sufficiently discovered in the Gospel, or the book of Grace.

In correspondence with this gracious design and determination of the blessed God, it is necessary that we also should have some hope and belief of God's willingness to be reconciled, or that there is grace and compassion with him for returning sinners. Heb. xi. 6, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him:" And in this view, belief and hope, we should resolve never to rest and continue in such deplorable circumstances: But desire and strive with all our powers to return to God, and never be content without obtaining his favour and his image, we should humbly resolve and determine that we will not perish, but that we will return to the great God, through the aids and encouragements of his Grace, in what way and manner soever he is pleased to return unto us. In this sense we may say, that *the kingdom of heaven, or the blessings of salvation suffer violence*, as our Saviour expresses it, Matt. xi. 12: *And the violent take it by force*,

This holy desire with some degree of resolution, seems to be the first step or motion of the will towards God; these are the beginnings of true repentance flowing from the hope in divine mercy; this is the first work of a saving conversion, even a restlessness of soul in this state of distance from  
God,

God, and under the hope of his mercy, a sincere desire and holy resolution of heart to return towards him, as our portion and our everlasting happiness. This is that repentance towards God, and hope in his mercy, which was necessary in all ages, and in all nations, and under every dispensation, in order to the salvation of sinful mankind from their state of misery, and in order to return to God.

5. When God designed to recover man to himself, and restore him to his favour, he designed also to secure a due honour to his government for all times to come, and obedience to his authority in all his future demands: And for this end man must be made, in some measure, to feel the evil of sin by the painful consequences of it, viz. Shame and remorse of conscience, and holy sorrow for his past transgressions: And God designed that these actings of the soul should have a powerful and a lasting influence, through his Grace, to make man hate every sin, and fear and avoid it, and awaken him to constant sincere endeavours of universal obedience to a forgiving God for time to come.

Agreeably to this design of God, the sinful creature must seek to have his heart in some measure, painfully affected with shame and sorrow, for his past folly and disobedience to his Creator; and must learn hereby to hate every sin, and constantly avoid it, and he must endeavour after universal compliance with the will of God in all future instances of duty. These are the natural and necessary operations and attendants of true repentance wheresoever it is found, and will be in greater or less degrees, working in the heart of every sinner that truly returns to God: For the great design of God in all his transactions of Grace towards fallen man, is to recover to himself a peculiar people, averse to sin and zealous of good works, and that under the motives of his pardoning love,  
and



and the aids of his sanctifying Grace, they walk before him in all holiness.

This also belongs to all the several dispensations of the Grace of God ever since the fall of man, and is required of every creature who should return to God.

6. In the New Testament the great God hath made much plainer discoveries of the particular way of his return to sinful man, viz. that he did not think fit to be reconciled to men, or bring them back again to himself, without a Mediator.\* This was intimated in God's earliest revelations of his Grace, when he spake of the Seed of the Woman, which should break the head of the serpent, and destroy the designs of the tempter to ruin mankind: But under the Christian dispensation it is much more abundantly manifested: And finding no other person sufficient for this work, God chose his own Son to become a Mediator between God and man; even that Son of his Love, who was one with the Father, and lay in his bosom, and had glory with him there, before the foundation

\* There may be several reasons why the blessed God thought fit to save mankind by a Mediator, and not without one, as (1) To maintain his own honour and the dignity of his Majesty; for it does not seem so proper for a God of such supreme glory, to admit such criminals immediately into his favour, and his presence, and his embraces, without some honourable Mediator to introduce them. (2) To do sublime honour to his Son Jesus Christ, who is the express image of his person and his first favourite, that as by him God made the world, so by him mankind should be recovered, new-created and restored to God's favour and image again. (3) To secure the salvation of man more effectually, uniting all the saved number in one unfailing and all-sufficient Head: And therefore his own Son was chosen for this office, as being able to undertake all that was necessary completely to bring back man to God.

of the world, that Son in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, even that Son by whom he created the world and mankind at first; it was by him, as a Mediator, that he designed to recover man from his ruin, his guilt, and his wretchedness.

This was the Messiah whom God promised to Abraham, who should be one of his posterity, and in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. This was he whom God spoke of, and recommended by many of the Prophets, and described under several types and figures in ancient ages, that when he came he might be better known and accepted by the world. This was he who in the fulness of time, was sent to take flesh and blood upon him, and to become a complete man. This is the "one and only Mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus," who was also one with God.

For this end it pleased the Father to furnish him with every necessary qualification: He anointed him with his Holy Spirit to dwell in him without measure; he appointed him to be born of a woman in low circumstances of life, and to grow up through all the stages of infancy, childhood, and youth, to the manly age of thirty; then he called and commissioned him to be a Prophet and Teacher of the Gospel, or the way of salvation: He set him up also for an example of humility and love towards God and man, and of holiness, submission and patience, and universal obedience through the course of his life, and then appointed him to die as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men. God laid our sins upon him, and "set him forth to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood."

This is he whom "God raised from the dead, and exalted him at his right hand," to be an intercessor for sinful man there, in the virtue of his sacrifice, and to be the head of vital influence to men,

men, to work repentance and holiness in their hearts, as well as "to be a Prince and a Saviour, to bestow forgiveness of sins."

God gave him also power to rule and govern all things for the good of his people, and ordained him to be Judge of the World at the great day. And all this was designed of God, that his Son, Jesus the Mediator, might answer every necessity, and be able to supply every want of sinful man, in order to his complete salvation.

Now in correspondence with these counsels of God the Father, in order to bring fallen man near to himself, sinners must believe the truth and certainty of God's appointment, that they shall not come to him again without a Mediator; and they must have a certain and well-settled persuasion of this Divine Constitution.

It is granted that there have been some such thoughts among mankind, in all ages: They have had some notion of coming to God by a Mediator, from an awful sense of the majesty and holiness of God, and of their own vileness and unworthiness, and their desert of his displeasure because of sin. So Job, when he had described his own sinfulness, in the sight of a pure and holy God, chap. ix. ver. 30, 31, he adds, "God is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment; neither is there any days-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon both;" for Job had not a clear sight at this time, of the great Mediator who was appointed, though it is plain he saw that he wanted one.

So again the Israelites at Mount Sinai, when they saw God in his terrible appearances of thunder and lightning, and a voice came from the fire, they said, "Let not God speak to us lest we die, but let Moses speak to us and we will hear," Exodus xx. 19. they declare they wanted a Mediator.

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The heathens had their lower deities, who were supposed, even by the philosophers, to be mediators between them and the supreme God.

Besides, God transacts his great affairs with mankind, oftentimes according to the language, customs, and manners of men. Now it is the natural and common way of offenders, against a superior, to get some mediator to speak for them, and bring them into favour again.

Mankind also, in order to this reconciliation, must have some knowledge of this Mediator: They must be acquainted with the most important articles which God has revealed concerning this great Mediator Christ Jesus.

We are called to behold him and to survey him in the glory of his personal excellencies, in his original fitness for this work of a reconciler, and in the several offices which God has commissioned him to sustain, as just before described. We must be made to see the blessed Jesus in the riches of his Grace, and his large and various furniture for this great undertaking: We must believe what God has pronounced concerning him, and from the bottom of our hearts humbly approve of these counsels for our salvation. It must be the language of our hearts in a way of echo to the appointment of God, "There is none like him, there is none like Christ, for a Reconciler of the offended God and offending man; he is every way a suitable relief to our wants, and all-sufficient to save."

We must see him as one that hath made a full atonement or satisfaction to the justice and majesty of God, for the sins of men by his own sufferings and death.\* We must approve of him as our great Teacher,

\* Though it is not necessary for every person among the fallen race of Adam, to find out the real and eternal necessity of his coming to God by a Mediator, or that



Teacher, and our glorious example ; as our High-Priest to reconcile us to God by his blood, and to make intercession for us at the mercy-seat in heaven ; as one that is able to save to the uttermost, because he lives for ever to fulfil all his offices. We must behold him as a Lord and Governor appointed to rule over us, and to give us laws, and to defend us from our enemies : We must see him as the most proper person to be our head of vital influence, for the communication of all grace and holiness to us, for the changing of our natures into his Father's image and his own ; and as one that is able and willing to take care of us through this world, and bring us safe into the Father's presence at last with exceeding joy. Thus the faith of the sinner echoes to the voice of God concerning Jesus the Saviour, in a way of assent to what God has revealed, and in a way of humble approbation of what God has appointed.

7. The great God foreseeing the obstinacy, corruption and wickedness of the heart of man, well knew that all this preparation for mankind to holiness and happiness, might at last be ineffectual, and might all be performed in vain, unless he took one step further ; and therefore to secure this salvation, he gave them into the hands of his Son Jesus Christ, and committed the care of their salvation to him ; he gave them to Christ, or entrusted him with the

that such an atonement must needs be made for the sins of men, yet since God saw it most proper to appoint this way, and to ordain his Son Jesus to be this Mediator and this Atonement, and to reveal it in so many plain and express declarations of his Word, I think it may be readily agreed, that it is our evident duty, now we know this Gospel, to approve of this Atonement so plainly revealed, and this Mediator, as a most reasonable appointment, and to come near to God by him, even by faith in his blood, if we would find certain acceptance with God.

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care of them, that he might fulfil his whole commission, and all his various offices, in a most effectual and powerful manner with regard to them; appointing also that this same Gospel should be preached to mankind, and the offers of this salvation should be made to them some way or other, in various seasons, in plainer or darker discoveries thereof.

In conformity to this great act of the Father in committing the souls of men into the hands of Christ, we also having seen him all-sufficient for this work, must commit our souls into his hand, as one able to keep what we commit to him until the last day: We must resign ourselves unto him, as a glorious undertaker for our salvation: We must receive him, or be willing to submit to him, in all his appointed offices of Prophet, Priest, King, Example, Head of Influence, &c. that we may receive from him every thing that we stand in need of, in order to our being brought home to God in heaven. We must trust in him as a Prince and Saviour, exalted to give repentance to sinners, and forgiveness of sins. We must trust in him as the great propitiation for our sins, our peace-maker, and the procurer of our pardon; we must live upon him as our Head of vital influence, to change our sinful nature, and to work the principles of all Grace in us by his Holy Spirit, and to preserve them in opposition to all our corruptions: We must depend on what he hath done and suffered for us, as the ground of our acceptance with God, and we must seek to him to form our nature so far in the likeness of God, as to fit us for happiness in the enjoyment of God for ever. We must commit the important affairs of our souls to him, as one that is able to take care of them, and to carry them safely through all the temptations and dangers of the present life; and we must trust in him to receive our departing spirits at death, to raise our  
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bodies from the dust at the last day, and to make our whole nature completely holy and happy, in the favour and image of God for ever. All this belongs to his commission which he received from the Father.

This is that great act of Christian faith, trust or dependance, which we are so often called to perform in the New Testament, which is foretold by the Prophets of old, and upon which our salvation is so much represented to depend, in the writings of the Apostles.

8. If I were to add any thing to what has been already said, it should be this, that as God the Father has appointed his Son Jesus Christ to be the great and general medium of our restoration and return to his favour, image and happiness, so he has appointed that in all our particular addresses and applications to himself, in a way of prayer or trust, thanksgiving or praise, we should make use of the name of his Son Jesus, as the only valuable and worthy foundation for our hope of acceptance; that so Jesus Christ the Son, as well as the Father, may be honoured and glorified throughout the whole course of our religion in our way to heaven.

And since this is the constant design, and the express appointment of the Father, it is necessary that we comply therewith, in all our addresses to God. We must come unto the Father by him in every part of worship: By him we must believe, or trust in God; we must pray to the Father in his name, we must ask forgiveness of our sins for his sake: It is by him we must offer up our sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise; and by him we must present all our services of obedience, and whatsoever we do in word or deed, must be all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may be accepted of the Father, and that the Father may be glorified in his Son.

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This is the appointment of the blessed God, and this must be our practice till we come to the fulness of this salvation in heaven, where we shall dwell for ever in the presence of God, and where we shall join with all the holy and happy tribes of mankind, of every age and nation, in ascribing blessing, and honour, and glory, and praise, to him that sits upon the throne, as our reconciled God, and to the Lamb for ever, as our glorious and successful Mediator. Amen.

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## ESSAY VI.

A VIEW of the manifold SALVATION of MAN by JESUS CHRIST, represented in order to reconcile Christians of different sentiments.

**M**ANKIND by nature lies under the ruins of the fall, both as guilty and as sinful. We are guilty in our persons, and exposed to the divine anger, as well as sinful in our nature, and ever ready to break his holy law. Whosoever therefore becomes our complete Saviour must relieve us under both these distresses.

As we are guilty in the sight of God, we are condemned in the court of his law and justice, we are liable to bear the punishment due to our sins, and we have lost all pretence of right to the favour of God and eternal life. Now our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, who has undertaken the work of our salvation, is an all-sufficient Saviour in every respect; by his obedience, death and intercession, he relieves us from the guilt of sin, and so delivers us from all obligations to the punishment of hell: He reconciles us to God, and gives us a right to life and salvation in the heavenly world.

As we are sinful creatures we are ever ready to offend God afresh, and are utterly unfit for his heavenly



heavenly presence: And Christ saves us in this respect, by changing our vicious nature and temper, sanctifying us by his Grace or Holy Spirit, so that we may be prepared for the enjoyment of God in heavenly places.

In these two things the substance of our salvation chiefly consists: And since these divine affairs could not be so well understood by us, according to those sublime ideas by which God the Father and his Son transact them in their eternal counsels and their subsequent dispensations, therefore God has been pleased to reveal them to us under such ideas or representations, and in such forms of language, as are borrowed from our common affairs in human life; and that not only by one figure or emblem, but by many representations thereof, that we might view them on all sides, and have a fuller knowledge of them, so far as is sufficient for our present state, or necessary to our salvation.

§ 1. Let us take a brief survey of this matter, as our Lord Jesus Christ delivers us from our sinful nature, or the power of sin that works in us, for he is our sanctification as well as our justification, 1 Cor. i. 30.

Our blessed Saviour in this respect, is sometimes represented as our almighty Redeemer, who rescues us from the power of Satan, and of our own desires, by the more powerful influences of his Spirit: He is our Sanctifier, who renews the image of God in us, which was lost by our first apostacy, and this he does by his creating power, for we are created anew to good works, by Christ Jesus. He is sometimes set forth as our Prophet, to give us light and the knowledge of God, and of the way of salvation, by the divine instructions of his Gospel. He is our Example to go before us, and to mark out for us the path of duty and holiness by his own footsteps, and to encourage our walking therein by his precedency, and so he is also our Forerunner

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Forerunner to heaven. Christ is also our King to give us laws, and to rule in our hearts by giving us an inclination to obey his laws. By his royal power also in his exalted state, he subdues sin in us, he mortifies our unruly appetites and passions which are his enemies, he brings every power of our nature into obedience and subjection to himself. He fits us for the heavenly kingdom, and actually bestows upon us this final happiness. He is also represented in Scripture as our vital Head, or Head of spiritual life, and believers are his Members; and so his Spirit becomes the spring of spiritual life in us, renews our sinful nature, raises us from death in trespasses and sins, conveys a new and divine life to us, and will at last, by the same spirit, raise our bodies from the dead to live for ever with him.

§ 2. The other branch of our salvation is that which I chiefly have in view at present, that which consists in the deliverance of our persons from the guilt of sin, from condemnation and punishment, and in that right to eternal life which is provided and given us by our Lord Jesus Christ. There are many representations thereof in Scripture, borrowed from the affairs of men; and the characters which our blessed Lord sustains, together with the respects that our faith and our salvation bear to him, under these characters, are chiefly such as these.

1. The first and most general character which our Lord Jesus Christ assumes, is that of a Saviour, by which name he is most frequently called in the New Testament. This is the very signification of his proper name Jesus, in the Hebrew, Matt. i. 21, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." He saves or delivers us from sin, and from all the painful or criminal effects and consequences thereof: "He delivers us from the wrath to come,"

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1 Thes. i. ult. he saves us by withholding the divine anger from us, and taking away every thing that provoked it, or might provoke it.

Salvation is the natural word to express the blessings we receive from Christ, as he is our Saviour; salvation from the guilt of sin and punishment thereof, partly in this world, and chiefly in the world to come.

Faith\* gives us a special interest in these blessings, by chusing him or receiving him as our Saviour, by looking to him from the ends of the earth, from the borders of hell, that we may be saved, Isai. xlv. by calling upon the name of the Lord, that we may be saved, Rom. x. and by yielding obedience to him: So faith in a large sense may be represented, for Heb. v. 9, "He is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him," or accept of all the blessings of salvation in his own appointed way.

2. The next title which is given to our Lord Jesus, on this account, is a Mediator, to make peace between an offended God and offending man. 1 Tim. ii. 5, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus." He is that days-man as Job speaks, chap. ix. 33, that great Reconciler, that umpire or person who can argue for us with the blessed God, who is able to "lay his hand upon both," to come between God and man, and to remove this dreadful difference betwixt them. And this he did by all

\* It is granted that the word Faith in Christ, in its most strict and proper sense, signifies a trust in him, according to the several discoveries made of him in the Gospel: But if taken in its most large and general sense, as it implies the address or application of a sinner to Jesus Christ for salvation, it includes in it those various actions of the soul which are attendants on this trusting, either with it, before it, or after it, as many Scriptures sufficiently manifest.

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those methods which God hath appointed in the covenant of redemption made with his Son Jesus Christ, by his incarnation, his obedience, his sufferings, death, and intercession.

Our salvation under this character is called *peace*, Rom. v. 1. Jesus Christ himself, for this reason, is called *our Peace* or *Peace-maker*, Eph. ii. 24, and Isai. xxvii. 5, where a sinner is represented as "taking hold of the strength or arm of the Lord, in order to make peace with him." It is called "reconciliation to God," 2 Cor. v. 18, and the Gospel is called the "word of reconciliation." And let it be observed, that our Mediator not only takes away the difference between God and man, but has also proceeded so far as to obtain an interest in the love and favour of God for ever, instead of his former wrath, displeasure, and condemnation.

Faith applies this salvation to us, or secures to us an interest therein, by our humble acceptance of Jesus Christ for such a Mediator as God has proposed him in his word. Now this acceptance of him as our Mediator, implies in it an earnest desire of reconciliation to God by him, as St. Paul beseeches the Corinthians to be willing to be reconciled: It is an inward and hearty approbation of what Christ has done, and what he does for our reconciliation in his mediatorial offices, attended with sincere repentance for past offences, and a submission to God for the time to come, which is necessarily, and in the very nature of things, required of all that would be reconciled to God by the mediation of Christ,\* and hereby we

\* The personal ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, was, "Repent and believe the Gospel," Mark i. 15. The message with which he sent his Apostles to the Jews was the same, Mark vi. 12, Luke ix. 6; and the business of St. Paul among the Gentiles, was to "testify to them repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus," Acts xx. 21.



become partakers of those blessings of pardon, peace and grace, which are procured by our great Mediator,

3. Christ is set forth as our High Priest in the New Testament, as he was typified under that character in the Old Testament; and especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. 4th, 8th, and 9th. Now in fulfilling this office, he offered a sacrifice acceptable to God upon earth, even a sacrifice of atonement, or propitiation by his own blood, and he ascended to heaven to present it there before the throne of God, Heb. viii. 3, and ix. 12, 22, 24. He went thither, not without blood, to appear for us in the presence of God, and to intercede for us in the virtue of his sacrifice, chap. vii. 25, which, in the language of Scripture, is represented "as carrying his blood into heaven, and as it were appearing with it there before the throne of God." All which was shadowed out by the High Priest carrying the blood of the sacrifice into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkling it there at the mercy-seat.

Our salvation under this character is called also peace, pardon or remission of sins, reconciliation, and eternal redemption, and the promise of the eternal inheritance, Heb. ix. 12, 15.

Faith entitles us to the saving benefits of the Priesthood of Christ, by the acceptance of him as our High Priest and Intercessor, to make our peace with God, by appearing before God for us in the virtue of his sacrifice, and making intercession for us there. Or faith may be represented as our coming to God the Father by Jesus Christ, as our High Priest, or applying to the throne of grace for mercy under the umbrage and encouragement of Jesus our High Priest, who is gone thither for us, Heb. iv. 14—16.

4. Our Lord Jesus Christ is described not only as our High Priest, but he himself was also the very sacrifice of propitiation or atonement, to take away

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away our sins, Heb. ix. 12, 26. He offered himself up to God for us as a sacrifice, Eph. v. 2. and his blood was shed for the remission of our sins, as in the words of the institution of the Lord's supper, recited by the several Evangelists, and by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xi. Isai. liii. 16, God the Father was pleased to make his soul an offering for sin.

Our salvation this way has the same names as under the former head, viz. the washing away our sins by his blood, Rev. i. 5; the forgiveness of sin, reconciliation to God, &c.

Our faith is called faith or trust in his blood as our propitiation, Rom. iii. 24. It is a dependance on the virtue and efficacy of this blood of Christ, for the procuring our pardon: It is a sort of "confession of our sins over the head of the sacrifice," which was an ancient ceremony in the Levitical law, sometimes performed by the offender, and sometimes by the Priest, whereby sins were transferred to the sacrifice who was to suffer for them, either by being slain, or by being sent into the land of separation and destruction, Lev. i. 4, and iii. 13, and v. 6, and xvi. 21. It is as it were a putting our guilty souls under the sprinkling of this atoning blood, that we may be cleansed from every defilement; and it doth, as it were, present to God the Father, that blood on which our hope is placed.

5. Christ is yet farther represented to us as an Advocate, which idea is a very different thing from his intercession as a High Priest. 1 John ii. 2, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The proper design of an High Priest is to transact affairs between God and man, for reconciliation and divine favour. An Advocate is a person appointed and chosen to plead before a Court of Justice against an accusation, and by his pleading to bring off his

client with honour, or to defend one who is charged with a crime, from the condemnation which might be due to it. So our Lord Jesus Christ, our Advocate, pleads against the charges which the law of God, or which Satan, our adversary, may bring against us; not by pretending that we are not guilty, but by pleading the atonement made by his blood for our sins, by pleading our pardon in the court of heaven, and by pleading his own righteousness, as the foundation of our hope; and therefore as the Apostle in this very text calls him "Jesus Christ the righteous;" in Rev. xii. 10, 11, Satan is represented as "accusing the saints day and night before God." Jesus Christ is their Advocate, presenting his own blood, and in this sense they are said to "cast down the Accuser by the blood of the Lamb," which pleads and "speaks better things than the blood of Abel:" It pleads for mercy, whereas the blood of Abel pleaded for vengeance.

Our salvation, in this sense, is called freedom from guilt, absolution or acquitment from the penalty, and a vindication of Christians from the charge of sin, and the condemnation thereof, which is obtained by the prevailing power and interest which Jesus Christ, our Advocate, has at the court of heaven, and by representing before the throne of God our pardon purchased by his blood, so that Satan has no further charge against us.

By faith we commit our case to this great Advocate, and we become his clients, dependants upon him; and in this sense faith may be said to "cast down our accuser by the blood of the Lamb," by trusting in this great and blessed Advocate, or resigning the important concerns of our souls to his care and faithfulness, to be transacted by him before the bar of God in heaven.

6. Our Lord Jesus Christ is set forth as our sponsor or surety. Heb. vii. 22, "Jesus was made a surety

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a surety of a better testament," the covenant of Grace, as manifested in the Gospel. A surety is properly one, who undertakes for another to do or suffer something for him, or who undertakes that this other person shall do such services, or suffer such penalties, or enjoy such privileges. So our Lord Jesus Christ has undertaken to answer the demands of the law of God for us who had broken it, to pay a compensation for our violations of the law, and to make peace betwixt God and us. He has also undertaken, that all his people shall be sanctified, and brought safely to the heavenly world. So Judah became a surety to his father Jacob for his brother Benjamin, whom he took with him into Egypt. Gen. xliii. 9, "I will be surety for him; of mine hands shalt thou require him." Reuben, in the foregoing chapter, was in like manner a sponsor for him, verse 37, "Deliver him into my hands, and I will bring him to thee again:" And Joseph bound Simeon in Egypt as a surety for the return of his brethren, and Benjamin with them, verses 19, 36.

Now as Christ was our surety, so our salvation may be called a freedom from our obligation to the penal law of God, which our Lord Jesus took upon himself to answer. Rom. vii. 6, "We are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held." Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Nor is this obligation of Christ as a sponsor, quite fulfilled till he has brought us all to heaven, and can say to his Father, "Lord, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me," as Heb. ii. 13; and shall present us before the throne without spot or blemish," Jude 24, &c. and Ephes. v. 25, 26, 27.

Now faith gives us an interest in all that Jesus Christ has done as our sponsor, by trusting ourselves with him entirely under that character, and ac-



cepting him as the Surety of this everlasting covenant.

7. Christ is exhibited in Scripture as the second Adam, as a common Head of his People, as a public Person, and their Representative. This has some difference in it from the former character, though in many respects they agree and coincide. Adam was the head of all his offspring, a common person and representative for them, but not so properly their surety in every sense. Christ is what Adam was, Rom. v. 14, 1 Cor. xv. 47. Christ is not a common person or representative in his intercession or his advocateship, though he is properly a Surety therein, for he has undertaken as a Surety for us, to plead in the court of heaven, and to bring us off with safety and honour: But in his obedience, in his death, and his appearance for us in heaven, he is our common Head and Representative.

Our salvation in this sense, may be called the glory of God. Rom. v. 2, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God:" And it may be called eternal life. Both these describe the happiness which was promised to man upon his perfect obedience to the law at first. Rom. ii. 10, and iii. 23, By sin "we are fallen short of the glory of God;" but we obtain by Jesus Christ salvation with eternal glory. In this sense Christ is our Forerunner into heaven, and he, as our public Representative, appears there for us, and has taken up places or mansions in our name, Heb. vi. last. We shall sit on his throne, Rev. iii. 21. It is also called an inheritance, and we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17, as we are one with him.

Faith accepts of Christ as our common Head, or great Representative, and gives us an interest in this salvation, by uniting us to Christ, and making us one with him. Christ is the original Son of God, and we are also the "sons of God by faith in

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in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 26; and thus we are coheirs with Christ, he as the Head, and we as the members; and faith saves us as it has been called the bond of union between Christ and us. When we become believers in Christ, whatever was done to Christ as a Head or a common Person, is then applied to us, either in the right to it, or in the possession of it. Christ was justified from sin, from all imputed sin, at his resurrection, and when we become the seed of Christ by regeneration through faith, we are justified thro' him, much in the same manner as we were condemned in Adam, as soon as we became the sons of Adam by a natural birth: As there is no new actual and particular sentence of condemnation past upon us at our birth, but we fall under the general condemnation, when we become the sons of Adam; so there is no new act of justification passed by God upon the creature at his regeneration or believing, but the word of God, which is his sentence, pronounces us justified at our faith, or our new birth; and our condemnation is taken away as soon as we are in Christ. Rom. viii. 1, "There is no condemnation now to them that are in Christ Jesus."

8. Another character which Christ sustains, is that of a Redeemer, and it is generally represented, both in the Scripture and by our Ministers, as one who redeems us both by power and by price. Now the redemption of us by his powerful Grace out of the slavery of satan, and our own lusts, and our rescue from the temptations of this world, belong rather to the other part of this salvation, wherein his sanctifying influences are necessary. But when Christ is considered as a Redeemer by price, he frees us by the price of his own blood as a ransom, chiefly from the hands of the vindictive justice of God, and from the bonds of the guilt of sin and condemnation, whereby we are held as breakers of the law of God. Yet our redemption from the

slavery of sin and satan may be also attributed to the blood of Christ, which procured sanctifying Grace for us. The Name of a Redeemer is very applicable to both parts of our salvation. So he "gave his life a ransom for many," Matt. xx. 28. "He redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. "He redeemed us also by his precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish or spot," from our vain conversation or slavery to sin, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; and "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood," Rev. v. 9.

Salvation in this respect is called redemption, Rom. iii. 24; eternal redemption, Heb. ix. 12; and we are said to be "bought with a price," 1 Cor. vi. 20; "and therefore we are the Lord's, and not our own."

Faith applies this benefit to us by our accepting the Lord Jesus Christ under this character as a Redeemer of our persons from this condemnation, or as our great Friend, who ransomed our souls from imprisonment under the bonds of the condemning law and justice of God, who ransomed us from our captivity, bonds, and miseries in every sense.

9. To sum up all other characters, I add in the last place, Christ is represented as our great Friend and Benefactor, one who came down from heaven to seek and to save lost sinners here on earth. He made a visit to our world to take special notice of all our wants, in order to relieve them all, and to do, and to procure for us whatsoever we stood in need of, in order to our eternal happiness. Under this character he first instructed or taught us the doctrine of our lost estate, and acquainted us with the methods of his salvation; he procured or purchased for us by his death, not only pardon of sin and future blessedness, but every grace and every blessing which was necessary, in order to our full possession

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possession of heaven, and no greater friendship can any man shew to another, than to lay down his life for him, John xv. 13.

Under this view salvation or eternal life is called "the gift of God by Christ Jesus," Rom. vi. 23. "Abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, in order to reign in life," Rom. v. 17. He bought again for us our forfeited inheritance in heaven.

Observe, this notion of Christ as a Benefactor respects his doing every kindness, and procuring or purchasing every blessing for us, and bestowing it upon us; whereas in the character of a Redeemer he bought or purchased our persons from imprisonment and condemnation.

Faith gives us an interest in these blessings of Christ as a Benefactor, when it comes to him, and seeks them at his hand, when it humbly depends upon Christ for them, and trusts in him to bestow them. Thus our faith is like a hand, whereby we receive these blessings which Christ has to bestow, or like the feet whereby we come or flee to Christ to partake of them; or it may be likened to the voice of petition, whereby we seek them at his hands, and call upon the Lord to bestow them.

Thus I have briefly run through many of the scriptural characters or offices, whereby our Lord Jesus Christ is represented to us, whereby our salvation is set forth, and whereby our faith is described as the appointed means of our interest in them. It is evident enough they often run into one another, nor did the Gospel ever design that these several representations of Christ, of his salvation and of our faith, should be kept so separate by exact forms of expression, as to please scholastic readers only; but that plain sincere souls under a sense of guilt and condemnation, might see and view them on every side, and might find something in Christ, suited to their sensation of their own



wants and miseries, and apply themselves to him for relief.

§ 3. The great God was pleased to send his own Son Jesus Christ to save us by these various characters or offices, and to represent him to us under so many relations, emblems or figures, borrowed from the things of men, perhaps for such reasons as these.

1. That those attributes of the Divine Nature, his wisdom, his power, justice, mercy, and faithfulness, which could not have so full an illustration one way, or under one expression or metaphor, might have another. God is said to be just and kind, and faithful in the forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Christ. He is just in bestowing this blessing upon us, since Christ has become our Sacrifice of Atonement, and made full satisfaction for our offences: He is kind or merciful in appointing such a forgiveness for us, and sending his own Son to purchase or procure it: He is faithful in fulfilling his promise made to Jesus Christ in the covenant of redemption, and bestowing upon us what Christ our Benefactor has purchased for us. His wisdom also and his goodness are rendered more conspicuous to us, in contriving and effecting our salvation, in assuring it to us, and bestowing it upon us in so many different ways.

2. That our Lord Jesus Christ might be the better known by us, and the more endeared to us, by sustaining these various offices and relations; and that we might be able to borrow some further ideas, and some clearer knowledge of these divine and important things of our salvation, from many of the common affairs and occurrences of life. When the blessed God has taken so much care to provide such a Saviour for us, and such an illustrious salvation, he is very desirous that we should  
view

view it on all sides, and be more thoroughly acquainted with it, as well as with that blessed person by whom he prepares and bestows it.

3. That all sorts of persons, of whatsoever temper or capacity, whatsoever want or difficulty they are in, might have wherewith to suit them and their circumstances; that every son and daughter of Adam, in their various ranks of life, might all learn the way to receive this Saviour, and lay hold on this salvation of Christ, and that he might render it easy and familiar to us by so many common similitudes or parallels, drawn from the things of common life: And thus those who know not how to apply themselves to Christ one way, might do it another.

As for instance, some poor feeble creatures who are convinced of sin, and ready to perish, perhaps may not know how to appear or address themselves to Christ, as a Surety, or as a Sacrifice, or as a Redeemer; for these things are done already, and in a great measure were finished long ago; but the meanest and poorest creatures can easily learn how to apply to Christ as a Mediator, to do something for them that is yet to be done, to reconcile them to God, and to bring them into his presence with comfort; or as an High Priest of Intercession, or as an Advocate to plead for them before the throne of God, and their faith can wait on Christ, can call upon him, and trust in him to make intercession for them in the virtue of his blood, or to present his blood before the Father as an atonement for their sins, to appear before God for them as their great Friend in heaven, to become their Mediator, Peace-maker, or Reconciler, to bring them into the favour of God.

Those who are babes in Christ may thus be nourished by the sincere milk of the word, and with diet fitted for their feeble capacity, when they

are not sufficiently grown to bear stronger meat, as the Apostle expresses himself, Heb. v. 12—14; whereas those who are well grown Christians, and, in the sense of the Apostle, may be called perfect, may know better how to converse with Christ as their great Representative, they may know and rejoice in him, and in the “power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and be made conformable unto his death;” but those that are in a lower form may not have their apprehensions so well cleared, and so much raised at present, although afterwards God may reveal also these things unto them, Phil. iii. 10, 15.

4. Christ is set forth under these various characters, that as our understanding in the things of religion, and in the graces and glories of Christ increases, we might take the faster hold of him, if I might so express it, and that we might have more various exercises of our faith, and more numerous evidences of the truth of our faith, and secure to ourselves more solid ground of hope, when we can view him in all these relations, and our faith can receive or lay hold of him under all these forms. Thus we may hereby obtain double and treble confirmation of our faith and comfort, Heb. vi. 17, 18. God gives us both his promise and his oath, to secure salvation to us; he swears, in order to confirm what he had promised, “that by several immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled to lay hold of the hope set before us.”

Thus has God been pleased also to do in the various representations he has made of Christ Jesus our Saviour, that our meditations and prayers, our hopes and dependencies, and indeed all the pious exercises of our souls towards Christ might have a rich variety for our entertainment, support, and joy;

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joy ; and therefore the Apostles have written these things unto the disciples of Christ, that their joy might be full, 1 John i. 4.

I add fifthly, another reason is, that God our Father and Jesus Christ our Saviour might have the larger revenues of glory from us, and receive honour from our hands in a rich variety ; that we might have our thank-offerings rising up to God and the Lamb, in many forms of adoration and expression ; that we might bless our dear Redeemer, rejoice in him, and do honour to his name under all those happy representations of his grace and glory, in which he has set himself before us in the Gospel.

The last reason I will add, shall be this : That in all ages the followers of Christ might have a more clear and easy relief, from those difficulties and controversies which may attend these great doctrines of our salvation, and which might darken and perplex the way whereby God has appointed us to be made partakers of this blessing.

§ 4. Since God has set forth our blessed Saviour with his salvation, and our faith which interests us therein, under so many various characters and expressions, the following difficulties will be very much relieved hereby, and several controversies abolished.

1. A Christian who reads these things in his Bible, cannot say, that Christ has saved us in this particular manner, and therefore he did not save us in the other ; as for instance,

When we read or assert that Christ was put to death for us, as a Sacrifice for our sins, we cannot say, therefore, he did not save us as a High Priest : Or when we read or assert that he saved us as our High Priest, we cannot say, therefore he was not a Sacrifice ; for the Scripture assures us, Christ himself is both the High Priest and the Sacrifice  
also.



also. Eph. v. 2, "Christ hath given himself for us as an Offering and Sacrifice to God."

One Christian will perhaps be ready to maintain, that Christ saves us as a great Friend and Benefactor, who has, by the price of his blood, purchased the blessings of grace and glory for us, and bestows them upon us; another may chuse to fix his eye more upon Christ as a Redeemer, and say he has bought or purchased our persons from the hands of Divine Justice, or he has redeemed us from the curse of the law, and from the bonds wherein we, as criminals, were held by the law of God: But neither of them should dare to say, He bought or purchased these blessings for us, and therefore he did not purchase our persons; for he has done both these under different characters.

Yet further, one Christian may delight more to fix his eye and hope on Christ, as a Surety or Representative of mankind, or of those whom he certainly and finally saves, and on that account he suffered death particularly in their room and stead, and secured to them certain deliverance and salvation; yet he cannot therefore affirm, that Christ did not, in any sense, die for all men, as a general Friend of man, or suffer death for their good; nor can he say, that the benefits of his death do not any way reach to all mankind. Another perhaps will say, Since all are dead, he died for all, as a common Mediator betwixt God and man, or as a general benefactor to procure conditional salvation for all men, and offer it to them if they are willing to come to him and receive it; but he cannot say, that he was not a proper Surety or Representative of his people, whereby he has secured certain salvation to them only: For as I have shewn in former papers, that he by his righteousness and death has directly and absolutely procured this salvation for all that believe, as their Head and Representative,

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tative, but yet he has also procured salvation, with all the glories of it, conditionally, for the rest of mankind, upon which foundation these blessings are offered to all men in the Gospel.

2. There is another sort of difficulty from which these various representations of the salvation of Christ may deliver and relieve us, the actions or the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, have not precisely the same relation, character or effect, with regard to one of his offices, as they have with regard to another; and therefore what is pronounced safely, with regard to the death of Christ under one character, cannot be with safety pronounced concerning it under another. As for example,

When so glorious and illustrious a person as Jesus Christ appears as our Friend and Benefactor, he paid so sublime a price by his death and sufferings, as in a strict sense to satisfy or make full recompence for all our violations of the law of God, and to merit pardon and eternal life at the hand of God for us: But when we consider him merely as our Representative or our Surety, and to answer what the law demanded of us, he cannot be so properly said to merit our pardon, or to make full and abundant recompence to the justice of God for our offences; for this might lead or encourage persons to infer, that we ourselves have satisfied God, or made recompence to him in the person of Christ, or that we have merited our pardon and our salvation, because what he did entirely as our Representative, we may in some sort be esteemed to have done in and by him.

Again. The death of Christ as a Surety and the second Adam, was his suffering of the curse of the law, and the penalty thereof in our stead, which we had incurred; and in this view his death and his being forsaken of the Father, was the same which sinners should have suffered; though in other respects, and when we consider him as a glorious

glorious Mediator, or super-eminent Benefactor, then he appears with all the dignity of his indwelling Godhead, and in this sense he paid a price of superior value, his death is the *tantundem*; and more, he makes an abundant compensation for sin, and a satisfaction to the demands of the law, and honours the justice of God more than our everlasting punishment could do, and hereby he merits for us those blessings which are above all our reach, or pretences, or obligations to procure or merit for ourselves.

Again. As he was a Redeemer, his death is a price paid for our souls to Divine Justice, in order to release us from the bonds of condemnation: But his death as a Benefactor, may be rather considered as a price for the blessings which he purchased for us, and of which we are made partakers through him.

3. There are other difficulties which are started among the several controversies of Christians with regard to our faith, and the way and manner whereby this faith interests us in Christ and his salvation: And since Christ has sustained so many characters, and stands in so many relations to us, our faith is exercised towards him in a correspondence to each of these relations and characters; and therefore, when we read or assert that our faith saves us in this way, or under this relation, we dare not therefore assert, that it cannot save us in any other way, or under another relation. I would endeavour to make this thing a little more clear, because there have many controversies arisen upon this head.

Let us then briefly recollect or take a short survey of the several representations which are given us of faith in Christ, according to these different characters of our blessed Saviour.

Faith, in its most general sense, nature, and design, as it refers to Jesus Christ, is the application

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or address of the soul to Christ, or to God by him, under any or all these characters, whereby he and his salvation are set forth in Scripture. Now these characters being so various, require different manners of address to him, which are represented in Scripture, which perhaps may be all included in faith, taken in its largest sense, together with those necessary acts of the soul, which must accompany, attend, or follow it.

Particularly then faith is sometimes represented by believing his Gospel, Mark i. 15, "Repent and believe the Gospel." But here it is to be supposed, that all the proper and sanctifying effects of this faith must attend it, and it must not rest in a mere assent.

It is a knowledge of Christ, John xvii. 3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Isai. liii. 11, "By his knowledge," or the knowledge of him, "shall he justify many." And here I might add, that this our knowledge requires a correspondent practice, otherwise it will be of no more avail towards salvation, than the knowledge of devils, who believe and tremble.

It is a believing in Christ, which perhaps ought rather to be rendered *trusting* in Christ. Isai. ii. 10, compared with Rom. xv. 12, "In him shall the Gentiles trust." 2 Tim. i. 12, "I know whom I have believed, or trusted." Eph. i. 12, 13, "who first trusted in Christ," or "hoped in him," as in the original.

Believing on his Name, John i. 12, "To them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to as many as believed on his Name.

Seeking to him, Isai. xi. 10, "To him shall the Gentiles seek."

Receiving Christ, John i. 12, "To as many as received him," &c. Col. ii. 6, "As you have received Christ, so walk in him."

Laying



Laying hold of Christ, *Isai. xxvii. 5*, "Let him take hold of my Strength, that he may make peace with me." *Heb. vi. 18*, "Those who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the Hope set before them."

Hearing of Christ, or hearkening to him, *Luke ix. 35*, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him," or "hearken unto him."

Calling upon Christ, *Rom. x. 12, 13*, "Whoever shall call on the Name of the Lord, shall be saved."

Coming unto Christ, *Matt. xi. 28*, "Come unto me all ye that labour," &c. *John v. 40*, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life."

Flying to him for refuge, *Heb. vi. 18*, as before.

Looking unto Christ, or beholding him, *Isai. xlv. 25*, "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth, and be saved." *Isai. lxxv. 1*, "I said, behold me, behold me, to a nation not called by my name."

Obeying Christ, *Heb. v. 9*, "He became the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him."

Believing in God through Christ, *1 Pet. i. 21*, "Who by him do believe in God."

Coming to God by Christ, *John xiv. 6*, "No man cometh to the Father but by me."

Thus you see faith, together with its consequent exercises of soul, is represented as our address or application to Christ for salvation, by and with almost all the senses or powers of nature. It is looking to him with the eye, it is hearkening to him with the ear, it is receiving or laying hold of him with the hand, it is coming to him with the feet, it is knowledge of him in the head, trust in him with the heart, calling upon him with the tongue, and obeying him with all the powers of soul and body.

Now

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Now it is well known, that there have been great disputes about the particular influence which this act of faith has, in order to interest us in the salvation of Christ. And here I will readily grant, that the word faith, primarily and chiefly implies, such a knowledge of Christ, such a belief of his Gospel, such a sense of our wants, and his sufficiency to supply them, as leads the soul to receive him under any of those characters in which the Gospel sets him forth, and more particularly to trust in him for this salvation.\* But there are many poor souls who have learnt sincerely to address themselves to our Lord Jesus Christ, by one or two of these characters and representations of faith, but were never carried on so far as explicitly to make an address to Christ under all his distinct relations, or to perform every one of these actions in their addresses to Christ. And can I suppose where the soul is very sincere in its desires of the whole salvation of Christ, both in the holiness and the happiness of it, and seeks it from him, that such souls shall be excluded, because they have not well learnt all the metaphors and figures under which these sacred things are exhibited in the Gospel?

Again. On the other hand, if one should say, Faith saves us as it is an eye to look to Christ that we may be saved, he cannot thence infer it does not save us as an ear to hearken to him, as an hand

\* It may be observed here, that almost every character or action, whereby faith in Christ is represented in Scripture, carries in it the notion of trust, hope, or dependance, so that the original and most proper sense of the word Faith is still maintained, and every sinner who sincerely applies himself to Christ for salvation, does certainly put forth an act of trust or hope in him, though he may not always so evidently and distinctly apprehend and judge of the inward acts of his own soul, or distinguish them so exactly.

to lay hold of him, or as a tongue to call upon him, or a heart to trust in him.

Again. If another should say, Faith saves us as an instrument\* to receive Christ, and his righteousness and grace, he cannot argue that it does not save us, as it is a condition, or a term of our being accepted of God through him; or if another should say, Faith saves us, as it is a laying hold of his person, or as a bond of union between Christ and us, yet he cannot argue, therefore Faith does not save us, as it is a looking or seeking to him from afar off, or as it is a calling upon the Name of the Lord.

God has been pleased in many ways to manifest these most important things of our salvation, and revealed them to us in a variety of human expressions, similitudes, actions, and relations, that the poorest and the weakest Christian might have support and encouragement for his hope.

Conclusion. It is confessed, that these thoughts are not sufficiently digested into perfect form, nor put together with all that accuracy as theological controversies require; but my sense and meaning in them is pretty obvious and evident. Perhaps this design might be more improved and promoted much farther by a wiser head, and a better pen;

\* Perhaps there have been no greater quarrels upon this subject than amongst those who have maintained that faith saves us as it is an instrument, whereby we receive Christ and his righteousness, and those who assert it is a condition upon which Christ has appointed us to be interested in his blessings: And though I think they may both be true, according to the representation I have made in this and other of these Essays; yet we have no great reason to be fond of either of these terms, especially when they are made a matter of controversy, because they are neither of them the expressions of Scripture, which is our supreme rule of instruction in the matters of our salvation.

and

and it might assist the solution of many difficulties ; and relieve the quarrels and contentions of different parties to a greater degree ; for it is evident, that the characters which our blessed Lord sustains, and the exercises of our faith on him are very various, and we are made partakers of this salvation, perhaps as many ways as our acts of faith bear different respects to the several blessed characters and offices which Christ sustains, in order to our salvation. Now, to him who has redeemed us by power and by price ; to him who has saved us by his blood and his Spirit ; to him who has purchased our souls from the bondage of the law, and from death and hell, and has purchased for us the blessings of grace, the pardon of our sins, and an inheritance in heaven, be glory and honour in endless varieties, and eternal praises from all the redeemed. Amen.

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## ESSAY VII.

### Against UNCHARITABLENESS.

ROM. xiv. 3.

*Let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth,  
for GOD hath received him.*

LUKE ix. 54, 55.

*His disciples said, Lord, wilt thou that we command  
fire to come down from heaven, and consume them ?  
But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know  
not what manner of spirit ye are of.*

CHARITY in the soul of man is the very picture of the Godhead, taken as it stands in the fairest light. Wisdom and holiness, power and justice, are various features of the Deity : They are indeed his very nature and essence ; yet the



the Scripture rather chuses to exprefs, that "God is Love," and that twice in one chapter, 1 John iv. 8 and 16. The beloved difciple that leaned on the bofom of Jefus, took peculiar delight in the contemplation of God, under this character. This appears in his Gospel as well as in his Epiftle. The other glories of that infinite beauty fhine with awful beams, and command my reverence: But methinks, I love to look upon fo glorious a Being in his moft condefcending air, and to converse with him in his mildeft and moft inviting afpect.

Charity in man is a grace of that alluring sweetness, that my pen would fain be attempting to fay something in favour of it. I find a ftrange pleasure in difcourfing of this virtue, hoping that my very foul may be moulded into its divine likenefs. I would always feel it inwardly warming my heart. I would have it look through my eyes continually, and it fhould be ever ready upon my lips to foften every expreffion of my tongue. I would drefs myfelf in it as my beft raiment. I would put it on upon my faith and hope, not fo as entirely to hide them, but as an upper and more vifible vef-ture, constantly to appear in among men. For our Chriftian charity, is to evidence our other virtues.

Uncharitablenefs is a loathfome part of the image of the fallen angel: It is akin to the hatred of God. "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath feen, how can he love God whom he hath not feen?" 1 John iv. 20. He that hates his Fellow-Chriftian, and brings railing accusations againft him for a difference in opinion, how can he expect to be beloved of God, who beholds in the beft of us fo many follies? By the word uncharitablenefs here, I would not include our neglect of charity to the poor, nor our averfion to errors of the groffer kind, but I mean our averfion

to such persons, who not only profess to be Christians, but who also agree with us in the chief doctrines of Christianity, viz. the pardon of our sins by the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and the sanctification of men by the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of faith in Christ, and good works, &c. I mean our aversion to those who differ from us in little punctilios of doctrine or duty which are not plainly written in the New Testament; those who maintain such an aversion to their fellow Christians, as to pronounce damnation upon them, or some terrible and unchristian censures, because they do not come up to their sentiments and practices in things which are of little moment, while they agree in all fundamental points, and such as are of most importance.

This uncharitableness is a vice attended with such a train of mischiefs, that I would set all my powers in array to fight against it. It is a fountain of such bitter waters, that I would fain dam up the spring. It is a plant of so poisonous a product, that I would dig deep and search for the roots, and tear up all the fibres of it, though they twined about my heart-strings.

§ 1. An uncharitable humour springs generally from some of these following causes.

1. First: From a malicious constitution of nature, an acrimonious or a choleric temper of blood. There are some animal engines of human flesh, that have their juices all soured in the very formation; and there is an ill ferment raised in such persons at the perception of every object, that is not just suited to their present fancy and inclination: And by the hard laws of union between soul and body in this our fallen state, the spirit too often complics with the fretful distempers of the flesh. There are but few that attempt to suppress the ferment, and to resist the angry motions of the animal; and of those few that attempt it,  
scarce

scarce one in ten is successful: For it is a work of toil and difficulty, perpetual watchfulness and unceasing prayer.

This ill humour mixes itself with religion, as well as with civil affairs. It diffuses its malignity through all the studies and the manners of the man, and gives a visible tincture to his notions and his practice. *Furio* can never converse about the calmest and most speculative points of divinity, but his indignation kindles against every different opinion, his fiery temper breaks out and blazes, and he bestows on his own deportment the honourable names of shining light and burning zeal. His peevish and angry passions are so blended with his understanding, that hard names are his best arguments; most convincing to himself, though they are the just scorn of the wise. He stabs his brethren that differ from him to the heart, with pointed railing; and from an aversion to an opinion rises to an immortal hatred of the person. If our great Creator has united any of our souls to bodies that are less infected with this vicious juice, we have reason to adore his goodness.

2. Self-love and pride, and a vain conceit of our own opinions, is another spring of uncharitable carriages. Did you ever see a weak and humble soul, sensible of its own poverty and ignorance, and ready to esteem others above himself, easily indulge this uncharitable humour? Alas! poor foolish mankind is very prone to esteem itself wise and knowing. Little *Laudillus*, who is almost always in the wrong, has much ado to persuade himself, that he was ever capable of mistaking. He secretly thinks all his opinions to be divine truths, and therefore he is very lavish in pronouncing error and heresy upon every notion and practice that differs from his own. He takes the freedom to chuse a religion for himself, but he allows no man besides the same liberty. He is sure

sure that he has reason to dissent from others, but no man has reason to dissent from him. He sets up for infallibility without a triple crown, and fixes a see of ecclesiastical sovereignty on this side the water. He awes some slavish spirits into submission, and they become treacherous to their own souls and to the rights of human nature, by delivering up their faith and consciences to his imperious dictates: Then the man grows haughty, surly, and severe, especially if he be advanced to any degree of honour and authority in the Church: Then in his inflexible justice he delivers up the humble and inquisitive Christian unto Satan, because he cannot assent and consent to all and every thing contained in his scheme; and he teaches perhaps his elder brethren the doctrines and discipline of the Gospel, as Gideon did the elders of Succoth, with the briars and thorns of the wilderness.

3. This hateful vice may be derived from a third original; and that is a constant acquaintance with the men and books of our own opinion, and avoiding all the writers that differ from us. This has a mighty influence to beget and maintain uncharitable notions; yet this is the constant practice, not only of the unlearned, but of too many of the learned world. *Hermes* sits all the year in his own cell, and never looks abroad beyond his own fraternity. *Hermes* reads the controversies as they are described only by one party, and disputes them over only in the books that are written on one side. He finds a great appearance of argument and Scripture there, and then proclaims it impossible that the adverse party should shew equal reason or revelation. And thus he proceeds to censure them as "men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith, and twisting the Scriptures to their own damnation."

But let you and I, my friend, who delight in charity, converse a little with authors that differ



from our present opinions, and we shall see their sentiments dress'd up so plausibly, and set in so fair a light, that might easily persuade men of sincere consciences to embrace them; and this will prevent us from censorious thoughts concerning our candid adversaries. There is scarce any thing that enlarges the mind more, and more disengages it from narrow and selfish principles, than a free converse with the virtuous and ingenious of all parties.

There is a memorable story to this purpose, concerning two neighbours in an unfociable town, who were always quarrelling about the private meeting and the parish-church: Both places of worship in that town were well supplied with preachers of good sense and serious religion; but each of them was the subject of unmerciful reproach between these two neighbours, whensoever they met, and their different methods of worship were mutually reviled; the one as formal and spiritless, the other as enthusiastical and indecent. At last *Pacifico*, their common friend, persuaded them to hear each other's minister, and accompanied them both one day to their different assemblies; and they were both surprized to hear the Gospel preached with a due degree of decency and fervour, both at meeting and at church. And though they continued still to adhere to their own party, as judging it, in some respects, suited best to their edification; yet they maintained hearty friendship with each other, and delightful society in religious conference. Thus the quarrelsome mistake was rectified by better acquaintance: They lived many years together in peace; they composed the animosities of different parties, that dwelt in the town; they died in perfect charity, and left a sweet influence behind them, and an honourable example.

4. A fourth spring of uncharitableness is, our reading the word of God with a set of notions established

established before-hand: And yet how common a method, and how constant is this? *Diacion* has long ago determined, that Bishops must be superior to Presbyters; he has received ordination from Episcopal hands; and hopes one day himself to be capable of ordaining others. Thus while he is growing up towards the mitre, he reads the Scriptures only to confirm his own opinions. He stretches and torments many an unwilling text, to make it speak the language of his own thoughts. He neglects the passages that favour all other forms of government and methods of ministration; or else he constrains them to mean episcopacy too. Every word that he reads, hath a diocesan aspect; and the first verse of Genesis can prove prelacy (for ought I know) as it has been able heretofore to demonstrate papacy, when *In principio creavit Deus cælum & terram*, decided the controversy, and set the Pope above the Emperor: For God made all things from one beginning, and not from two.

*Synodias* reads the Bible with a Presbyterian glass, and *Fratrio* with a congregational optic: They can find nothing there but their own opinions, and both of them wonder that *Diacion* should not see them too. *Fratrio* turns over the Scriptures with great diligence and meditation, and as often as he finds the word church there, he thinks of nothing but a congregation of faithful men; as the church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, are so many single congregations. When *Synodias* meets the same word in his Bible, he is often in the midst of an assembly of divines; and especially when any power is attributed to the church, he is sure it must intend a classis of Presbyters, or consistory of Elders. When the same word falls under the eye of *Diacion*, in his course of reading the New Testament, he cannot imagine any thing is meant short of a diocese: All his churches are or should be as big as counties or

thires. And I might add, that when poor *Parochianus*, the mason, finds leisure to read a chapter, and lights upon the mention of a church in it, he thinks immediately of a tall stone building with a steeple upon it, a bell or two, and a weather-cock.

I might give the like instances of many other terms in Scripture, to which men have unalterably fixed their several different ideas, and raised consequences from them, and interpret the word of God by them, without enquiring whether their ideas are conformable to the sense in which the Scripture uses those expressions: And then it is no wonder that their schemes of ecclesiastical government are so different: And yet each of these prepossessed opiniators think their own exposition of the text so evident, that they chide the perverseness of all other men, as though they were resolved to wink against the light. It is like a person of a fretful constitution, whose eyes are also tinged with the jaundice, he quarrels with every man that he meets, because he will not consent to call all things yellow. Thus by the false light of affection in which they behold some beloved texts, and their negligence of all others, or at least by the colours of prejudice that they throw upon them, each triumphs in his own sentiments, and pronounces the Apostles and Prophets of his side. Then he lets fly many a sharp invective against all the men that presume to oppose him; for in his sense they oppose the Apostles themselves, and fight against the authority of God.

But when a man takes a Bible into his hand without a pre-conceived scheme in his head, and though he may make use of systems to secure himself from inconsistencies, yet he puts them not in the place of the Holy Scriptures, but resolves to form his body of divinity by the New Testament, and derive all his opinions and practices thence; he

he will then find so many expressions that seem to favour the several contending parties of Christians, that in some points he will perhaps be tempted to doubt of all opinions; and when in any doubtful point his judgment is led to a determination, it is always with great caution, and by slow degrees: He is not carried by violence to any dogmatical conclusion; he is modest in his assertions, and gentle towards all whose judgment and conscience have determined them another way, because he met with so many probable arguments on their side, that had almost fixed his opinion the same way too.

If I may be permitted to speak of myself, I might acquaint the world with my own experience. After some years spent in the perusal of controversial authors, and finding them insufficient to settle my judgment and conscience in some great points of religion, I resolved to seek a determination of my thoughts from the Epistles of St. Paul, and especially in that weighty doctrine of justification. I perused his letter to the Romans in the original, with the most fixed meditation, laborious study, and importunate requests to God for several months together: First without consulting any commentator, and afterwards called in the assistance of the best critics and interpreters. I very narrowly observed the daily motions of my own mind: I found it very hard to root out old prejudices, and to escape the danger of new ones: I met with some expressions of the Apostle that swayed me towards one opinion, and others that inclined the balance of my thoughts another way; and it was no easy matter to maintain my judgment in an equal poise, till some just and weighty argument gave the determination; so many crossing notions, perplexing difficulties, and seeming repugnances, lay in my way, that I heartily bless the Divine Goodness that enabled me at last to surmount them



all, and established my judgment and conscience in that glorious and forsaken doctrine of the justification of a sinner in the sight of God, by the imputation of a perfect righteousness which is not originally his own.

From my own experiment I can easily guess what confounding intricacies of thought others pass through in their honest searches after truth. These conflicts did exceedingly enlarge my soul, and stretched my charity to a vast extent. I see, I feel, and am assured that several men may be very sincere, and yet entertain notions in divinity, all widely different. I confess now and then some opinions, or some unhappy occurrences are ready to narrow and confine my affections again, if I am not watchful over myself; but I pray God to preserve upon my heart a strong and lasting remembrance of those days and those studies, whereby he laid within me the foundation of so broad a charity.

5. Fifthly. Another cause of uncharitableness is a want of reflection on the grounds of our own opinions. We should be more just to ourselves, and more gentle to others, if we did but impartially review the reasons why we first embraced our several principles and practices.

Perhaps it was education determined most of them, then let us chide ourselves severely for building upon so careless and slight a bottom: Or let us be civil to the greatest part of mankind, who came by all their principles the same way. Perhaps we were led into particular notions by the authority of persons whom we reverence or love; then we should not upbraid our neighbours that have been influenced into different sentiments by the same springs. Perhaps we have felt interest sometimes ready to bias our thoughts, and give us a secret inclination or aversion to a party; let us then pity the frailty of human nature, and have compassion

compassion upon men whose judgments are exposed to so mean a bribery, and sometimes have been warped aside from the truth. Or finally, perhaps it was deep meditation, a daily search into Scripture, and fervent prayer were the methods by which we pursued knowledge, and established our principles upon solid reason. Let us then be so charitable to those whom we contend with, as to suppose they sought after truth the same way, and then our contentions will have less spleen in them, less indignation against those that differ from us.

The true reason why we kindle our anger against our Christian brethren that are not intirely of our party is, because we not only have the vanity to fancy ourselves always in the right, and them in the wrong; but we judge their consciences and their sincerity too, that they did not come honestly and fairly by their principles, while we never consider how we ourselves came by our own.

6. If we will but trace the principles of those that dissent from us through all the length of remote and feeble consequences, and be sure to find some terrible absurdity at the end of them, we shall not easily maintain our charity. How often do we put their opinions upon the rack! We torture every joint and article of them, till we have forced them to confess some formidable errors which their authors never knew or dreamed of. Thus the original notions appear with a frightful aspect, and the sectators of them grow to be the object of our abhorrence, and have forfeited their right to every grain of our charity.

*Evangelillo* believes that Christ Jesus has completely answered the demands of the law in order to our justification, and that in the room and stead of all believers. *Nomineus* hears this doctrine, and thus begins his chain of severe and false deductions: "Then," saith he, "the law has no power to demand obedience of us; then we are not

to be charged with sin, though we break the law hourly : then we may condemn all the commands, sport with the threatnings, and defy God the Law-giver and the Avenger." He proceeds then to pronounce Evangillo a wicked Antinomian, and in the name of the Lord "delivers him up to Satan, that he may learn not to blaspheme." Evangillo, on the other hand, (who has been well instructed in the way of salvation, and has learned the duties of faith and hope, but is not yet so well improved in the charity of the Gospel), hears Nomineus preaching up repentance and sincere obedience, as the conditions of our justification and acceptance with God to eternal life : He smites his breast with his hand, and cries, "Surely this man knows no use of Christ in our religion, he makes void his righteousness and his death ; he is a mere Legalist, a Papist, a rank Socinian, he "preaches another Gospel, and though he were an angel from heaven, let him be accursed." Thus when men dress up their neighbours in all the strained consequences of their opinions, with a malicious pleasure, they pursue this thread of argument, they impose horrid conclusions which can never be drawn from their doctrines, and never leave the pursuit till they have pushed each other to blasphemy and damnation.

Whereas if the doctrines and the persons now mentioned were put into the balances of truth and charity, perhaps the principles of Evangillo would be found to have most weight of Scripture on their side, and Nomineus more of the fair shews of reasoning : But neither the one would be found to throw Christ out of his religion, nor the other to make void the law : And both their lives would appear shining in holiness, but they want the bright garments of charity.

7. Let me name a seventh spring of this uncharitable humour ; and that is, when we magnify circumstantial differences into substantial ones, and  
make

make every punctillio of our own scheme a fundamental point, as though all the Law and the Prophets hung upon it, as though it were the ground and pillar of all the truth in the Gospel. *Crucius* will not allow his dissenting neighbour, to be a member of the Christian church, because he separates from the modes of worship in the church of England; he cannot believe him to be a friend to Christ crucified, because he refuses to have his child baptized with the sign of the cross. Again, the dissenting neighbour pronounces *Crucius* to be a mere formalist, and to have nothing of the Spirit of God in him, because he seeks not to obtain the gifts of the Spirit, and scarce ever addresses himself to God in prayer without the assistance of a form.

*Sabbaptes* that lives within two doors of them, will not believe either of his neighbours to be a Christian, because they have never been plunged under water, i. e. in his sense they were never baptized: And both of them in requital agree to call *Sabbaptes* a Jew, because he worships only on a Saturday. Whereas the all-knowing God looks down into all their hearts, beholds the graces that his Spirit hath wrought there, owns them all for his children and the disciples of his Son, though they are not yet perfect in love. They have all one common God and Father, one Lord Jesus, one faith, one spirit of prayer, one baptism, though they quarrel about times, and modes, and forms.

It is a very uncharitable practice to think that a man can never journey safely to heaven unless his hat and shoes be of the same colour with ours, unless he tread the very tract of our feet, and his footsteps be of the same size. It is a censorious and perverse fancy to pronounce a man no Christian because every thought of his soul, and all the atoms of his brain, are not just ranged in the same posture with mine. How unreasonable is it for a man of



brown hair to shut his brother out from the rank and species of men, and call him an ox or a lion because his locks are black or yellow? I am persuaded there is a breadth in the narrow road to heaven, and persons may travel more than seven a breast in it: And though they do not trace precisely the same track, yet all look to the same Saviour, and all arrive at the same common salvation: And though their names may be crossed out of the records of a particular church on earth, where charity fails, yet they will be found written in the Lamb's book of life, which is a record of eternal love, and shall for ever be joined to the fellowship of the catholic church in heaven.

8. This iniquity of uncharitableness has more springs than there are streams or branches belonging to the great river of Egypt; and it is as fruitful of serpents and monsters too: Itself is a hydra of many heads; I have drawn seven of them out, at length, into open light, that they may be cut off for ever: But there are others still remain, as full of fire and infection. Shall I mention an eighth here,—the applause of a party, and the advance of self-interest? Have we never observed what a mighty prevalence this has over the hearts and tongues of men, and inflames them against their neighbours? They assault every different opinion with rage and clamour: They rail at the persons of all other parties to ingratiate themselves with their own; and when they find their account in it, their tongues are sharpened as drawn swords; they fight for honour like young volunteers, or like the Switzers for pay. When they tear away men from their habitations, cast them into prisons, and put to death the ministers of the Gospel, they boast, like Jehu when he slew the priests of Baal, “Come and see my zeal for the Lord.” And as he designed hereby to establish the kingdom in his own hands, so they to maintain the preferments, as well

as

as the reputation they had acquired among their own sect. But ah! how little do they think of the wounds that Jesus the Lord receives by every bitter reproach they cast on his followers! Nor will it be found a sufficient reason for the persecution of them one day, that they did not conform to human inventions.

*Sicco* has lately departed from a Baptist society, and he hardly thinks himself sufficiently come out of the water, till he is kindled into a flame against all those that baptize by immersion; he rails at his former brethren, to make the Presbyterian and Independent churches believe that he is a true convert: How art thou mistaken, poor *Sicco*, to attempt this method of caressing thy new acquaintance? For they had rather receive a Baptist into their fellowship, whose faith and holiness are conspicuous in his life, than open their doors to an uncharitable wretch that proves his conversion only by the change of an opinion, and placing his religion in railing.

*Acerbion* has left the communion of his father, and is become an ecclesiastic of high note in a more powerful and splendid church: He seldom puts a volume into the press without hard words in it, against the society which he has forsaken: His pen is dipt in gall daily, and he grows old in malice and censure. It is pity he should so far expose the church to which he now belongs, as to think that she will esteem him a more dutiful son, by how much the less charity he has for his dissenting brethren.

9. A ninth spring of this uncharitable practice is fixing upon some necessary and special point in Christianity, and setting it up in opposition to the rest, or at best in opposition to some one of the rest.

“I have long observed,” says an ingenious writer, “that Christians of different parties have been

eagerly laying hold on particular parts of the system of divine truths, and have been contending about them as if *each* had been *all*; or as if the separation of the members from each other, and from the Head, were the preservation of the body, instead of its destruction. They have been zealous to espouse the defence, and to maintain the honour and usefulness of each apart; whereas their honour as well as usefulness, seems to me to lie much in their connection: And suspicions have often arisen betwixt the respective defenders of each, which have appeared as unreasonable and absurd, as if all the preparations for securing one part of a ship in a storm were to be censured, as a contrivance to sink the rest."

And I think we may as well borrow the similitude expressly from the Scripture itself. 1 Cor. xii. 14, &c. "The body is not one member but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, is it therefore not of the body?" And how ridiculous would it be, if we should suppose "the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? And if they were all one member, where were the body? The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

In the same manner, repentance, faith, and love, are three necessary graces that go to make up a Christian; and I might cite several texts of Scripture, where each of these three are made necessary to Christianity. Is it not therefore a most unreasonable thing to set up either repentance, faith, or love so high, as though the whole of Christianity was contained in it, when it is evident that nothing else can make a Christian but such a faith as brings  
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with it the peace of God and holiness of life, or such a love as produces universal obedience, which must be the effect of this faith?

In Christianity "nothing avails but such a faith as works by love," unto all holiness, Gal. v. 6. "Repent and believe the Gospel," was the first preaching of Christ and his Apostles, Mark i. 15. And in other places, faith is indispensably coupled with repentance, Acts ii. 19, xx. 21. Without repentance our sins will not be forgiven us. Without faith in Jesus Christ we have no interest in his salvation. True faith must be such as purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9; and produces good works as the necessary evidences to prove our faith true, James ii. 17, 18.

What a strange sort of monstrous Christian would this be, who pretended to much faith, but had no love nor repentance? And as monstrous would that pretender be, who had love or repentance without faith. As God hath set the members of the body, every one of them as it hath pleased him, so hath he appointed repentance, faith, and love, to fulfil their several offices in the christian life. What a piece of madness therefore is it, to separate those things which God hath joined in his Gospel? Or to preach very long and talk much upon any one of these, so as to hinder that due respect that is to be paid to the other two? There is no man is, or can be a true believer in Christ, if he has not repentance and love, producing good works, as well as that faith which is necessary to make a Christian. Let us take heed, therefore, lest we give occasion, by any of our discourses, to exalt one of these graces to the prejudice of the rest, for the utter loss of either of them will destroy all our pretences to Christianity.

When *Soldo* has formed one of his Christians exactly agreeable to the humour of his own imagination, and dressed him up in all the feathers of  
strict



strict orthodoxy that he can find in the severest writers, and by a motto written upon his forehead, has called him the *man of faith*, I am at a loss to know what Christian church would receive him into their communion, when he neither professes repentance, nor holiness, nor true love to God or man. It has indeed some of the appearances of a Christian statue, but it is a man without feet or hands for walking or moving, a man without life or activity to run the Christian race, or to do any thing for God in the world. What glory can our Lord Jesus Christ receive from such a useless figure? What honour can such an imperfect image possibly bring to the Gospel? Or what service can he be of in the world, or in the church?

10. The most common cause of uncharitableness, and the last I shall mention, is, that a great part of the professors of our holy religion, make their heads the chief seat of it, and scarce ever suffer it to descend and warm their hearts. Jesus the Saviour has been discovered to them in a good degree of outward light, but has never been revealed in them with power, nor their souls changed by Divine Grace into the image of the Gospel. While they boast of their orthodox faith they forget their Christian love.

*Stellino* has stuck his brain all over with notions, and fancies his higher sphere sufficiently illuminated for the conduct of mankind, that is round about him, and beneath him: But this set of notions is like a winter-night overhung with stars; bright and shining, but very cold. Natural affections have no room in his soul, it is too much spiritualized with opinions and doctrines. His divinity lies all in his understanding, and the common duties of humanity scarce ever employ his tongue or his hands.

If a man does but profess every tittle of his creed, and believe just as *Stellino* believes, he is declared

declared fit for holy communion; and if he will but dispute warmly for the hard words that distinguish his scheme, and can pronounce *Shibboleth* well, he shall not be adjudged to death or damnation, but joined heartily to the fellowship of the saints, though his flaming immoralities proclaim him a son of satan. Satan himself has perhaps a more accurate and nice skill in the controversies of divinity, than the best of our professors and doctors have arrived at; but his pride and malice are chains of darkness, and make a devil of him, in spite of all his knowledge. Yet Stellino affects too near a resemblance to Lucifer, that fallen son of the morning.

Vices that are odious to human nature, and wild licentiousnesses of a bitter tongue, which destroy all civil society, are very little faults in his opinion, when put into the balance with orthodoxy and zeal. If my conversation among men be blameless and honourable; if my practice consist of piety; if I profess a solemn faith in Christ, the eternal Word, the only begotten Son of God, who came in the flesh, who died to make an atonement for the sins of men, and testify my unfeigned subjection to him, and declare the grounds of my hope; yet I must not be admitted to the special parts of worship where Stellino presides, because I am not arrived at his degree of light, and differ from his expressions a little, when I explain the words justification and the covenant of grace. His lips are ever full of declamation and controversy, and he harangues copiously upon the most affecting points of our religion; he talks much of the amazing condescensions of Divine Mercy, and of the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man; but it hath not yet taught him love to his fellow-creatures, nor kindness towards his brethren.

Such another Christian is *Misander*; he reverses the duties of Christianity which St. Paul describes,  
he

he speaks evil of all men but his own party, he is a brawler and ungentle, shewing meekness unto none; and while he pretends that "the Grace of God, which brings salvation, hath appeared unto him," he lives still in malice and envy, and wears the visible characters of the men of heathenism, "hateful and hating one another," Tit. ii. 11, 12, Tit. iii. 2, 3, 4. He flourishes and enlarges upon the gracious qualities of our Redeemer, our great High Priest, who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" yet himself has not learnt from so glorious an example, to "have compassion on them that are ignorant and out of the way;" but rather being exalted in his own knowledge, he condemns "his weak brother, for whom Christ died." Take thy Bible, O vain man, and read a few lines in the 8th chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to Corinth. "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth; and if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know; but if any man love God, the same is known of him." And St. John will assure thee, that "he that loveth not his brother knoweth not God, and if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar," 1 John iv. 8, 20.

Yet let not any think that I advance charity so high, as to place it in the room of knowledge and faith, or to make it a sufficient ground for our admittance into heaven at last: Nor can I suppose it alone to be a sufficient plea for a reception into any visible church of Christ on earth. A confession of the Name of Jesus, with the most important and most necessary articles of his blessed religion, a declaration of my personal faith or trust in him, together with a solemn dedication of myself unto the Lord, may be justly required of me by that Christian society, into which I desire admittance. In default of these the greatest instances of charity will never constitute me a Christian: "Except ye believe

believe that I am he," saith our Saviour, "ye shall die in your sins," John viii. 24. "If a man strive for a prize, yet is he not crowned unless he strive lawfully;" i. e. according to the methods prescribed in the Gospel, the knowledge and the faith of the Son of God, 2 Tim. ii. 5: And the sentence of our Lord is dreadful and peremptory. "He that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xiv. 16. "With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x. 10. But without charity my faith can never be true, for it must be such a "faith as worketh by love," and discovers itself by all the "fruits of the Spirit, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance," Gal. v. 6, 22.

Thus far have we traced the vice of uncharitableness in many of the properties that belong to it, and the causes of it, and many instances in which it discovers itself in the world, and in the church; and it appears a very shameful vice, and opposite to the religion of the blessed Jesus.

§ 2. But what shall we say to those who take the venerable names of the sacred writers, and charge them with the same scandalous practice?

There is one *Momus*, who is well known in the world for a person that is ready to find fault with the best of men, if he can suspect any thing which he imagines worthy of blame in them. This man rather than not vindicate himself from the charge of uncharitableness, he will bring even the Apostles themselves into the accusation, particularly St. Paul and St. John.

"Paul," says he, "must be a very uncharitable man, for Heb. x. 25, 26, he tells us, that "if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Thus it is plain, he will not suffer a man to be guilty of any wilful sin, after his profession



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fession of Christianity, but he damns him for it without hope.

But I would have *Momus* consider that these are the very words of Scripture and Inspiration, and not merely St. Paul's opinion. Nor is the sense true which he puts upon these words: It is by no means every wilful sin, after we have received and professed Christianity, that will bring us under such an irreversible condemnation; but this wilful sin, as it stands in the context, plainly refers to our entire quitting the profession of our Christian faith, verse 23, and forsaking all Christian assemblies, without repentance or returning to them, as verse 25. And it is no wonder, if a man who roundly renounces Christianity wilfully, and without persecution, or any compulsion, should be laid under this dreadful sentence.

Let it be also particularly remarked, that as these verses come in just after the Apostle had been speaking of the atoning sacrifice for sin, which Christ himself offered, as a fulfilling of all typical sacrifices of the Jewish law, chap. ix. 10, he expresses this condemning sentence in this language, "there is no more sacrifice for sin," i. e. if a man renounces the sacrifice of atonement which Christ has made for sin, there remains no more sacrifice for him to trust in, or to hope for, "but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Thus it appears, that this wilful sinner is condemned for renouncing the only method of atonement provided for the pardon of sins, which it was the chief glory of the Christian religion to reveal and establish.

St. Paul also is charged with high uncharitableness by this *Momus*, for what he says, 1 Gal. viii. 9, "If any man preach any other Gospel to you than that ye have received, let him be accursed,"  
and

and yet he owns verse 7, that it is "not another Gospel," but merely "a perversion of the Gospel of Christ;" and is this enough to be accursed for?

Let *Momus* consider how grossly the Gospel must be perverted, when it is turned into such a sense as the Galatians seem to have been taught by these troublers of their church, verse 7. It is such an error as would have carried them again into Judaism, with all its yokes of bondage, would have obliged them to be circumcised, and to observe the Jewish festival days, months, and years, Gal. v. 5. Such an error as shews them to have run back to the ceremonies of the Jewish law for justification and acceptance with God, verse 4. Such an error as gave occasion to the Apostle to charge them, if ye pursue it "ye are fallen from Grace," i. e. from the Gospel of Grace: And that "Christ would profit them nothing, would become of no effect to them," verses 2, and 4.

And after all it must be said these are the words of Scripture, and of the Spirit of God, and not merely of St. Paul himself as a private writer; and will the man deal thus with Scripture? You see to what lengths this temper will carry a man.

But still he pursues his accusation against the Apostles, and makes St. John to be grossly guilty of want of charity in his 2d Epistle, verses 9, 10, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine," i. e. the doctrine of Christ, mentioned in the foregoing verse, "receive him not into your house, nor bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds."

Now to answer the unreasonable censure of this *Momus*, let us enquire what this doctrine of Christ is; and where should we find the most important parts of it but in the same writer? Chap. i. 7, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Chap. ii. 2, "Jesus Christ the righteous is  
not

not only our Advocate with the Father, but he is also the Propitiation for our sins." Chap. iv. 10, "God loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our sins," and that every true Christian "is born of God," chap. v. 1, 4; i. e. as other verses of this holy writer in his Gospel explain it, he is *born-of the Spirit* of God, John i. 13, and iii. 5. 6.

It appears then that the errors of such whom the Apostle would here exclude from our friendship, are such as do not acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the Messiah, or not to be a propitiary Sacrifice for the sins of men, nor allow that every true Christian is regenerated, and born of God, or of his Spirit, i. e. by the powerful, renewing, and sanctifying influences thereof, as other Scriptures explain it, particularly John i. 12, 13, John iii. 3, 5; and as St. Paul expresses it, Eph. i. 16, 20, "By such a mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead."

Again: I would ask *Momus*, Why are the names of Christ and the Holy Spirit appointed so generally to be used in baptism, which is the ordinance which initiates us into Christianity? Is it not to put us in mind, that when we profess Christianity we profess the chief articles that relate to him as our Saviour, viz. Jesus Christ to be the Propitiation for our sins, we profess to be born of the Spirit, or regenerated and renewed to holiness, by the Spirit of God? Now if a man asserts himself to be a Christian, when he believes and professes neither of these doctrines, then St. John may be to blame indeed, in denying the benefit of common Christian friendship to such a man.

But whither would this *Momus* lead us? What? Would he make a Christian out of such adversaries to the Name and Gospel of Christ, as neither trust in him as a Propitiation for their sins, nor hope to be renewed and made holy by the Spirit of God?

There

There must be some measure and bounds set to every general virtue; and even to Christian charity itself. This does not extend to infidels in the same sense. Surely, there must be due limits set to every thing of this kind: They can scarce be called Christians, and treated as such, let their profession be what it will, who renounce Jesus Christ in his chief design of coming into the world, as a Propitiation for sin, and who renounce the Spirit of God as the effectual spring of our regeneration and holiness. If all deists and infidels may be received into the Christian church, into our good esteem and friendship, those may also be our fellow Christians who deny the most important principles of Christianity: But let us take heed that we do not give that which is holy to such who have no claim to it, and give charity and Christian friendship to those, who, according to the word of God, have no pretence to it.

It has been objected indeed against this second as well as against the third Epistle of St. John, that they have not sufficient proof of their divine original. Now it would be too large in this place to enter into a discussion of that question: But there is nothing said in this Epistle that is disagreeable to the sense of other holy writers in other parts of Scripture; and by our Protestant writers these Epistles have been generally represented as part of the word of God: Nor can I find sufficient reason to reject it, merely because some persons that need a more abundant measure of indulgence and of charity than the Scripture seems to allow, will not allow it this post of honour, and that is because it excludes them from our good esteem, from Christian communion and friendship.

Yet after all this censure of *Momus*, I would still hope there are some serious and pious souls, who have been honestly seeking after the truths of religion, and searching the word of God to find  
 them,



them, who may have indulged some uncautious and unhappy hour, wherein they have suffered themselves to be led away into this great snare of the evil one; so that they have begun to doubt of this blessed doctrine of the atoning Sacrifice for sin, by the blood of Jesus Christ, though it is so strongly, so expressly, and so often asserted by several of the Apostles, in their writings.

It is my sincere and earnest desire, that God would speedily break these unhappy snares, whatsoever they are, by which their thoughts have been captivated into so dangerous a mistake, 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26; that he would please to open the eyes of their mind by his enlightening Grace, that they may not run on so far in this way as to be exposed to the loss of the benefit of this only Propitiation for sin, and lay themselves open to that severe sentence of the word of God, that "there remains no further propitiatory sacrifice for them, but a certain fearful expectation," &c. Heb. x. 26, 27. Forgive me, blessed Jesus, if any of the softer influences of animal nature have warped me aside, while I am treating of this glorious virtue of charity, to indulge these milder sentiments, and depart in any measure from the stricter sense of thy holy word.

§ 3. Now if we have not dwelt too long on this subject, in tracing out this mischief through its several springs and properties, and if my reader be not quite out of breath, I would ask him to take another turn with me, and walk down to a short survey of the same vice in its mischievous effects; that we may be more warmly animated to pursue this iniquity to the death: If it were possible, we would leave it neither root nor branch, name or memory, in the Christian world.

1. The first and most obvious mischief I meet with among Christians of an uncharitable humour, is the constant disquiet of their own spirit, the vexation

vexation they give their neighbours, the injury they do to their own edification, and to the edification of all that converse with them.

*Singularis* has a set of notions and rules whereby he adjusts his own creed and his practice; and whatsoever he hears in religious conference, or in public duty, that does not precisely square to his model, disquiets his ears, disrelishes with his taste, disturbs his conscience, and thus prevents all the benefit that his soul should receive from the discourse, or worship.

I grant it very lawful for a man to be disgusted with a sermon, where the greatest part is spent in notions contrary to his judgment, and dressed up in language very foreign to his usual way of converse about divine things; this is shocking to the spirit of the best Christians, and the conscience is so nauseated with the largest part of the entertainment that his soul cannot be nourished, and it is proper for him to forbear attendance upon such a preacher, and chuse one more suited to the temper of his own spirit. But *Singularis* hath an aversion to a whole hour's discourse, because there were three sentences of a strain different from his opinion. He reaps no blessing from a sermon of excellent composition, of divine materials, of an evangelic frame and just method, because there is one expression in it that is the characteristic of another sect. He sits uneasy under a noble discourse of justification or of faith, because (it may be) the Minister avoids the terms *imputed*, *meritorious*, *condition*, and *instrument*; and mentions none of the tortured words of noise and party.

I will not commend a preacher that is always affecting to disguise his own opinions, and hiding himself in ambiguous language, and that in points of moment, thereby to maintain the applause of all sides. But I must chide *Singularis* for the wry faces he makes at church, when he hears but a  
word

word or two of contrary sound, or when his ears miss a set of darling phrases.

Three years ago I was in company with *Acharrissa*, a sour old woman of a very narrow spirit, and gave her a gentle admonition for the frequent reproaches she cast on the ministers of Christ, that did not preach exactly according to her humour; I blamed that petulant liberty which she took with all her neighbours and acquaintance, to censure them severely for every lesser difference of practice or worship: I recommended to her reading that valuable sermon of the Reverend Dr. Tillotson against Evil-speaking; but I could not persuade her to peruse those few pages not only because of that strong propensity she had to speak evil of others, but because it was the work of an Archbishop; "which sort of office," said she, "is a mere human invention, and the Scripture knows it not." I know another name which has the same narrow spirit. *Sequilla* hath ever given up the conduct of her soul to the curate of her parish, and after many years attendance on his ministry, in great security of conscience, is well assured that she shall go to heaven. Perhaps by some terrible providence, or by some plain word of Scripture, she is awakened to a deep sense of sin, and danger of eternal death. She is visited by the curate, and though he saith some good things to her, yet she finds not the way of peace. A kind neighbour recommends to her some book of consolation written by a dissenter, but she refuses the book and the comfort at once, lest she should be guilty of that damnable sin of separation from the church. "How can I ever," said she, "expect the peace of God from the pen of a schismatic?" And thus endures the racks of conscience rather than she will indulge charity enough to read what a non-conformist hath written.

*Presbycal,*

*Presbycolo*, a man of the same stamp, heard a sermon lately, and commended it above measure, confessed how much light and love was kindled in his heart by it, and bestowed unusual strains of respect upon the minister. "But *Presbycolo*," said I, "this man never had the hands of a Bishop, or preaching Elder, laid upon his head, to ordain him." At once I saw his colour change, his spirits sink, and he concluded that all the divine affections in his soul under that sermon must needs be counterfeit, "because now I know," said he, "the Preacher is no Minister of Christ." O the wretched influence of this vice of uncharitableness upon feeble and deluded souls! It proceeds so far at last as to make persons scrupulous of attending upon any ordinance, lest the administrator should not be a man exactly of their stamp. Thus their hearts are vexed with everlasting disquiet, for they can hardly hear a prayer, or an exhortation, but they find some offence in it; like a man with a thorn in his hand, whatsoever he takes hold of gives him pain, but the cause lies in his own flesh.

There are other instances of this kind to be met with in the world. *Nitidelli* wears his hair three inches below his shoulders, and it is ever well beautified with powder: He frequently eats of a dish of food where blood is one of the ingredients, and he often takes half a pint of red wine to his own share: He maintains serious religion at home and abroad: But *Censorina* cannot join with him in the special ordinances of worship. "It is a shame for him," she cries, "to wear long hair; he is a wine-bibber, and he abstains not from blood; nor can I be reconciled to him upon any terms, unless he retrench these horrible excesses." But he still goes on careless and regardless of the peace of his fellow Christian, and scorns her little clamours, rather than endeavours, by gentleness and compliance, to satisfy or remove them. Now walkest



thou not charitably, O *Nitidelli*, for thou grievest thy sister with thy meat and garments for whom Christ died. But I would fain have *Censorina* learn also that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Both of you therefore ought to "follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another," Rom. xiv. 15, 17, 19.

Nor is this mischief confined to single persons : It makes a farther progress still, and infects the neighbour and acquaintance. Every Monday, in the evening, *Crites* sits at the head of a club, that meet together to arraign and sentence the sermons of the foregoing day. "Did you mark, my friends, such an expression under the fourth head? It sounded harsh in my ears. Surely the man is not orthodox ; pray acquaint your families of the danger of his opinions, and forbid their attendance." "Truly," replies *Momian*, "he insisted so much on the Grace of God, that he left but one quarter of his hour-glass for the duties of the Gospel : I fear he's a Supralapsarian, my spirit rises against him, and I must warn my acquaintance of his doctrine." A third person in the company begins to surmise that his morals are not good : "I have heard an ill story of a Preacher not long since," saith he, "and surely this must be the man?" And then he proceeds in a direct opposition to the grace of charity, as it is described by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xii. 5, Tit. iii. 3. "I easily believe all that is evil of him ; I am provoked at him ; I hope no good from him ; I cannot bear his principles ; I cannot endure his person ; and I should rejoice in the seasonable death of such an Antinomian as this is." Thus does the root of bitterness spring up into wide branches, it bears poisonous fruit, and many souls are troubled.

2. The next pernicious effect I take notice of, is, that an uncharitable carriage brings a disgrace upon Christianity, beyond the guilt and scandal of heathenism. It is the character of the Gentiles indeed, that they were "hateful and hating one another;" but not for different principles of philosophy which they professed, nor different methods of worship, which they paid to their gods. There were no civil wars proclaimed, nor courts of inquisition erected amongst them upon this account, though their controversies about divine things were not trivial, and they differed widely in the very foundations of religion; and, as an ingenious author expresses himself on this subject, "Though poets have made the gods enter into factions and quarrels for common-wealths, yet common-wealths never did the same for their gods."

But if the heathens had been never so much enraged, and quarrelled never so fiercely for the sake of opinions and formalities; still they were almost infinitely more excusable than Christians can pretend to be: For the very doctrines of most of their sects permit revenge; and they have many a bloody principle amongst them. But Christianity is the most mild, the most gentle, and the most peaceable religion. Never a doctrine was taught amongst mankind, that hath so much of love and sweetness in it: Never a system or rule of duties, wherein meekness and candour, charity and compassion, are so prescribed and enforced.

Never was there a religion instituted by God or invented by men, with so much goodness in the heart and soul of it, or so many charms and amiableness in the face. It is built upon the foundation of God's eternal love. It was love that assumed human nature, and became the great Prophet and Teacher of it, and the Spirit of Love in our hearts is its vital spring within us: It is Divine Love dwelling in flesh, hanging upon a cross,

bleeding and dying for enemies and rebels, that hath purchased all the promised blessings of our religion; and it is the same love arising from the grave, and reigning in glory, that distributes these blessings to men; and in all the melting language of compassion, invites us to receive them. It was this love dwelling personally amongst men, calls himself our brother, and charges us to love all the professors of the same faith as brethren. He requires that we should be ready to lay down our lives for one another, as he did for us all; and orders it to be the distinguishing character of all his followers. "Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another," John xiii. 34, 35.

God himself is infinite love; Christ is love incarnate: And a Christian is, or should be an effigy of that love, graven to the life, by the finger of the Divine Spirit. Now for the professors of such a doctrine to quarrel about trifles, and grow malicious upon every punctilio of different sentiments, how grossly do they abuse the Christian name? They rob their own religion of its due honour amongst men, and bring infinite shame and discredit upon Christianity in the face of infidel nations. It is for the sake of this madness, which is found amongst the pretended followers of our blessed Lord, his name is blasphemed among the heathens; and the conversion of the kingdoms of this world to the faith of Christ, rendered almost impossible.

3. Thirdly. This uncharitable temper rages even to wars and blood; hath laid the churches of Christ desolate, and dispeopled many countries in Christendom. It doth not spend itself in secret like a sullen humour, or a vapour of melancholy, but breaks out into public violence and disorder, and all that is near it feels the indignation. It sits brooding over the eggs of a cockatrice, and  
daily

daily sends forth a fiery flying serpent, instruments of cruelty are in its habitation, and all its children are sons of blood and rapine.

O my soul, come not thou into their counsel; unto their assembly mine honour be not thou united; for in their anger they have slain millions of men, and in their self-will they have digged up the foundations of a thousand churches. "Cursed be their anger for it is fierce, and their wrath for it is cruel." These men of division at the last judgment day, may justly expect to be divided from Jacob, and to be scattered far away from the Israel of God. "For God will render to every one according to their works." And surely these bloody persecutions are such works as demand like revenges from a God of justice; if such as practise them die without repentance.

If you ask me the method whereby this uncharitable temper has advanced to such a degree of rage and barbarity, it is very obvious and easy to be explained. At first these men assume to themselves the name of the Church, and lodge in themselves a sort of infallibility, or at least pretend to a divine authority to determine finally all doubtful cases of religion, and to rule over the consciences of men. They set up the wretched trade of creed making, and demand the belief of mankind: Then they give out decrees, such as Christ and his Apostles never gave, and pronounce damnation against all that doubt or disbelieve them; though their fables are not cunningly devised, because they are made too big for belief. Some of them contradict the most substantial principles of sense, reason, and Christianity.

You will see this plainly exemplified in a few instances I shall give of their decrees and canons. As, "Whosoever shall affirm that there are more or less than seven sacraments, let him be anathematized, excommunicated, or accursed. Whoso-



ever shall affirm that the substance of bread and wine remains in the eucharist, together with the body and blood of Christ, or shall deny the wonderful change of the whole substance of bread into body, and wine into blood, which the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation, let him be excommunicated. Whosoever shall say, that extreme unction doth not confer Grace, nor remit sin, nor ease the sick, let him be excommunicated.\* Thus oftentimes the same anathema and eternal death is denounced against such as disobey their decrees about matters of trifling importance; matters which they themselves can never pretend to be, in their own nature, necessary to salvation. "He that shall say a common minister can confirm as well as a Bishop, let him be excommunicated. He that shall say, the ceremonies, the vestments, &c. in the celebration of the mass, are incentives to sin, rather than duties of piety, let him be excommunicated. He that shall say, a priest may become a layman again, let him be excommunicated. And whosoever shall say, that the hierarchy of Bishops, Presbyters, and Ministers, or Deacons, is not of divine ordination, let him be excommunicated."

When this church has excommunicated and cursed Christians better than herself, and cast them out of her arms, she gives them up to the secular power,† with an awful and deceitful charge, that the obstinate heretic shall not be hurt in life or limb; but with a full design that they should be tortured, and destroyed. Having solemnly delivered them to the devil in their spiritual courts, the temporal executioner sends them out of the world; not that their souls may be saved in the

\* Canons of the Church of Rome, in the Council of Trent.

† See the History of the Inquisition.

day of the Lord, but that they may be plunged immediately into utter darkness, where satan dwells.

It is the command of Christ to the Roman church, by Paul the great Apostle, Rom. xiv. 1, "That such as were weak in the faith should be received to their fellowship, and not troubled with doubtful disputations," such as the observance of meats and days, and things of like moment: But the Romans have now so far rebelled against this rule, as to admit persons into their communion upon no other terms than a blind submission to all the doubtful disputables which that church imposes. They had an order from St. Paul, Rom. xv. 7, "to receive all such as Christ had received;" and consequently to reject no others but those whom Christ rejects; but they forgot this charitable canon of our Lord, while they receive thousands to their communion which have no visible marks of the image of Christ, and reject thousands, and curse them to hell, whom the Lord Christ will acknowledge for his, and pronounce them blessed of his Father at the last day.

When they first begin to assume this sovereignty over faith and conscience, they use a shew of argument, and pretend to instruct and enlighten the weak and the ignorant. They admonish them to hearken to the church; but if the ignorant are still weak in belief, and cannot be convinced of the lawfulness of their ceremonies; then they send the sheriff and the jailor to carry on the dispute; a prison and the gibbet are the next arguments; and when reason and Scripture will not assist them, they employ fire and sword to contend earnestly for the fables that were never delivered to the saints.

To draw up an account of the horrible effects of uncharitableness would be to transcribe the ecclesiastical history of many ages. Whole churches, the eastern and western, have damned one another

plentifully upon the account of imposed days and trifles, which the Gospel leaves indifferent, or rather forbids. How many of the canons of ancient councils have been influenced in their formation by this assuming spirit, and as terribly enforced in their execution, to the reproach and devastation of Christendom?

But it moves my grief and wonder, that a modern church, that pretends not to infallibility, should assume a strange dominion over our faith and practice. It asserts its own "power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith;" when in the very preceding words, it confesses, that "the churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred; so also the church of Rome has erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith." It demands my admiration, that such a church should canonically denounce her excommunications in abundance, against those that dissent from her in some disputable things, while they retain all her professed doctrines of the Christian faith.

And it is a pain and a shame to our eyes, to look backward upon other times, and to behold pamphlets, written against toleration, by such as are Ministers of the Gospel of Peace, that perfect law of liberty. It was their opinion then, that sectaries ought to be silenced by the civil power. Now sectary is a name of broad dimensions, and has a terrible stretch with it; the long scourge would in time reach all those who differ from the hand that manages that weapon of chastisement. None must be authorized to preach in any form, but by the solemnity of imposing hands, by a company of authorized men. Because some subjected themselves to the determination of a Synod, they would make it the duty of all their neighbours to wear the same yoke; and thought others were bound

bound to become slaves to the same dictates. But I forbear this charge, and almost wish it cancelled: For as the magistrate did not put in practice the uncharitable pamphlets, so those reverend and honourable writers have been taught to acknowledge the mistake of their zeal, when their own verbal rods have been turned against them, and became real scorpions, with stings and scourges a thousand fold. The fathers have been dearly instructed in the value of toleration and liberty by most abundant retaliations. The children have learned to preach this part of the Gospel well, and I am persuaded they will never forget it again.

If we turn over more ancient annals, the Marian days give us horrible examples of fiery zeal in the clergy, and the reign of the succeeding virgin princess is hardly to be purged from the stain of blood. Blessed be God, who has put into the heart of our civil governors to restrain the fury of all spiritual administrators. The long and dreadful train of gaolers, prisons and plunderings, ruin and banishment, silencings and violent suppressions, are no longer the attendants of the anathemas of any church among us. And I hope no church mourns the loss of them; though there are some anathemas that abide still as terrors to those that are weak in faith, and not very honourable monuments of that church's charity.

In these late years the scene of Great Britain was a little shadow of Spain and France, where dragoons and the inquisition manage ecclesiastical discipline. We were brought to the very gates of Aceldama. The agents of Rome were ready with their instruments of death. Adored be the Divine Spirit, that awakened the rulers of the church to behold the common danger, and raised in them generous resolutions to exercise charity towards their brethren. Glory to that God, whose kind providence sent us a deliverer, and forbid England



to become a field of blood and martyrdom. And new songs of praise are still due unto Divine Mercy, for establishing the person and heart of our Queen Ann, in the throne and principles of so glorious an example and predecessor. Her gentle government subdues the hearts of all her people to herself; her charity joins their affections to one another; her parental care and love reconciles Christian parties, and her wisdom unites Christian nations.

4. The last mischief I shall mention, and which should fright us terribly from the peril of it, is, that an uncharitable man wounds the very vitals of that religion, by which he hopes for eternal life. And whilst his fury rages against his brother for accidental differences, he shakes the very foundations of his own Christianity, and endangers his own salvation; his boasted orthodoxy in opinion is made vain, while his practical ungodlinesses are so real; and his faith appears to be little better than that of devils, when he mingles so much of their malice with it. In vain does he glory in the brightness of his notions; in vain doth he presume "darkness is past, and the true light now shineth: For he that sayeth, he is in the light, and hateth his brother, he abides in darkness, even till now," 1 John ii. 8, 9.

Such a wisdom composed of mere opinion and wrath, can never lead up to heaven, for it did not descend from thence. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not." Whatever your pretences of truth be, "this is but lying against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, carnal, devilish," James iii. 14, &c. It is impossible there should be true faith without

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sincere love. "If I understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge, if I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and were destitute of charity, my pretensions to religion are the mere sound of noisy brass, or a tinkling cymbal," 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. It is such a charity that "suffereth long, that is not provoked, that beareth all things, and believeth all things," that taketh all things in the best sense, and "thinketh no evil." It is such a charity as this that is the substantial part of our religion. Charity in the heart, is absolutely required to make up inward Christianity; and the appearance of it in the life is a most necessary part of godliness.

It is true indeed, that all graces are very imperfect in this present state, and there is much of uncharitableness remaining in too many good men: But that man can never be good that has no charity. *Zelus* has spent his life in declaiming against some little modes and gestures used in worship by his fellow Christians, or in imposing some un-instituted ceremonies on the consciences of his brethren. He hath stirred up the magistrate to persecute some of them to prisons, and almost to death. He flattered his conscience with hopes that his zeal for the church should not only render him acceptable at the last day, but provide him a large reward. He lies now languishing upon a bed of sickness, on the very borders of eternity, and is terribly awakened to behold his own mistake; while he stands within sight of the tribunal of Christ, and the face of the Judge, his former practice appears to his conscience in its true and frightful shape; the fire that hath animated him against his brethren now flashes in his soul, and discovers its infernal source; now he dreads to be made an example of the same vengeance among devils, with which he hath pursued his fellow mortals; he

groans out his last breath in bitter agonies; cries to the God of love for mercy upon his departing spirit; and expires almost without hope. He is gone. But we leave his soul to the compassions of a God who can better pardon his mighty errors, than he would forgive others in their little mistakes.

Thus dreadfully hath this vice of uncharitableness prevailed against the honour of Christianity, and the peace of mankind. Thus sacrilegiously hath it taken away one of the brightest marks of the best religion, and that is love. It hath defaced the beauty of our holy profession, scandalized the sacred name that we bear, made a slaughter-house of the church of Christ, and deceived the souls of men to their own eternal ruin.

Just as I had finished this essay, *Pharissaino* happened to come into my study, and taking up the first leaf, read the title, and was persuaded this discourse must be written against himself.

“No,” said I, “there is not any man alive personally intended in these papers, but if you please to peruse them, and shall apply the characters to yourself, I hope you confess Divine Providence has led you into a conviction of your false zeal.” *Pharissaino* sat him down immediately, and with a running eye passed through every page. And though the frequent wrinkle of his brow discovered his inward disgust, yet he paid me many a ceremony; and “behold,” said he, “how language and fancy will dress up zeal like a monster to fright men out of their fervour of spirit.”

“I have heard,” added he, “that you have some skill in painting, pray draw me the figure of this uncharitableness in just and proper colours; this monster which you complain has so narrowed and disgraced, and murdered Christianity.” “I will attempt it, *Pharissaino*, if you will furnish me with a sheet of large paper, and that of the fairest kind,

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to represent the Christian church in this world, First, I will pare it round, and reduce it to a very small compass; then with much ink will I stain the whiteness of it, and deform it with many a blot; at the next sitting I will stab it thro' rudely with an iron pen; and when I put the last hand to complete the likeness, it shall be smeared over with blood.

If the scandal and cruelty of an uncharitable temper have not been described in characters sufficiently frightful, it must be imputed to a want of skill in the hand that attempted it, for there is no want of formidable features in the vice itself. Perhaps a little pen hath not force enough to wage successful war against this mighty iniquity; and the printer, in two or three vacant pages, permits me to call in the aid of some great and well known names: Names who fought against it in their lives, who being dead, yet speak, and plead heartily that it may be destroyed. They espoused the cause of charity with a warm zeal, being persuaded that it made a considerable part of our religion, and that the contrary humour was destructive to all that is called Christian.

Since this infection is not confined to one party of men, but hath spread itself wide through all Christian societies among us, I have taken the liberty in the foregoing leaves to strike at it where-soever I found it; and those who hide this venom in their heart still, to whatsoever tribe they belong, let them hear the words of their dead Fathers: Let them blush at their own folly, and no longer refuse to be healed.

Archbishop Tillotson, in his works in folio, page 217, acquaints us that "other sects were distinguished by little opinions, or by some external rites and observances in religion; but our Saviour pitches upon that which is the most substantial,



stantial, the most large and extensive, the most useful and beneficial, the most human and the most divine quality of which we are capable, and that is love." And page 126, he declares, that " uncharitableness is as bad an evidence, either of a true Christian or a true Church, as a man would wish. Damning of men is a very hard thing, and therefore whenever we do it, the case must be wonderfully plain." And page 364, " We should rather be contented to err a little on the favourable and charitable part, than to be mistaken on the censorious and damning side. Our blessed Saviour frames his parables with a remarkable bias to the charitable side, to reprove the uncharitableness of the Jews, who positively excluded all the rest of mankind besides themselves, from all hopes of salvation. An odious temper, which to the infinite scandal of the Christian name and profession, hath prevailed upon some Christians, to a notorious degree."

Dr. Owen, in his discourse of the person of Christ, page 222, saith, " One Christian who is meek, humble, kind, patient, and useful unto all, that condescends to the ignorance, weakneses, and infirmities of others, that passes by provocations, injuries, and contempt, with patience and with silence, (unless where the glory and truth of God call for a just vindication) that pitieth all sorts of men in their failings and miscarriages, who is free from jealousies and evil surmises, that loveth what is good in all men; and all men, even wherein they are not good, nor do good, — doth more express the virtues and excellencies of Christ, than thousands can do, with the most magnificent works of piety or charity, (i. e. liberality), where this frame is wanting in them. For men to pretend to follow the example of Christ, and in the mean time to be proud, wrathful, envious, bitterly zealous, calling  
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for fire from heaven to destroy men, or fetching it themselves from hell, is to cry, "Hail unto him," and to crucify him afresh unto their power."

Mr. Baxter, in his *Christian Directory*, part I. page 40, writes thus: "Surely if the very life of Godliness lay not much in unity and love, we should never have had such words spoken of it as you find in Scripture. Love is to the soul as our natural heat is to the body; whatever destroys it, destroys life; and therefore cannot be for our good. Be certain, that opinion, course or motion, tends to death, that tends to abate your love to your brethren, much more, which under pretence of zeal, provoketh you to hate and hurt them." And a little after, "To limit all the church to your party, and deny all or any of the rest to be Christians and parts of the universal church, is schism, by a dangerous breach of charity." And page 41, he asserts it is "a most dangerous thing to a young convert to be ensnared in a sect. It will, before you are aware, possess you with a feverish, sinful zeal, for the opinions and interest of that sect. It will make you bold in bitter invectives and censures against those that differ from them. It will corrupt your church communion, and fill your very prayers with partiality and human passions. It will secretly bring malice under the name of zeal into your minds and words. In a word, it is a secret but deadly enemy to Christian love and peace. Let them that are wiser, and more orthodox and godly than others, shew it as the Holy Ghost directs them, James iii. 13, &c."

The Baptists, in their Appendix to their Confession of Faith, 1677, say, "The discharge of our own consciences, in point of baptism, doth not any ways disoblige or alienate our affections or conversation from any others that fear the Lord; but that we may and do, as we have opportunity, participate of the labours of those whom God hath  
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endued with abilities above ourselves, and qualified and called to the ministry of the word; earnestly desiring to approve ourselves to be such as follow after peace with holiness; and therefore we always keep that healing word of the Apostle before our eyes, Phil. iii. 15, 16." And at the end of the Appendix they declare, "that in as much as these things," viz. modes of baptism, &c. "are not of the essence of Christianity, but that we agree in the fundamental doctrines thereof, we do apprehend there is sufficient ground to lay aside all bitterness and prejudice, and in the spirit of love and meekness, to embrace and own each other therein; leaving each other at liberty to perform such other services, (wherein we cannot concur), apart unto God, according to the best of our understanding."

## ESSAY VIII.

Of the DIFFICULTIES in SCRIPTURE, and the different OPINIONS of CHRISTIANS in things less necessary.

§ I. *A short Account of these Difficulties.*

CONCERNING the doctrines and duties which peculiarly belong to the New Testament, I have generally concluded this to be a good rule of judgment, that according to the degree of their importance or necessity to salvation, such is commonly the degree of their evidence; and the frequency of their repetition is, for the most part, proportionable to their usefulness. Those great truths of our religion, and those practices of Christianity, without which we cannot be saved, are described in the word of God in large and fair characters, so that "he who runs may read them." These visions and revelations of the mind and will of God, are written and made plain upon the tables  
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of the Evangelists, or of the Apostles, Hab. ii. 2. They are not mentioned once and briefly, but many pages explain and repeat them; they stand in a divine and convincing light, and may easily be understood by those who with a humble and teachable spirit, enquire what they must believe and do, in order to please God.

This remark is much confirmed by that promise which assures us that it should be so in Gospel times. The high-way to heaven is so plain, that the way-faring men, or strangers, though they be fools in understanding, shall not err therein," Isai. xxxv. 8. A man that labours in his daily calling, in the city or the field, or a servant in the lowest rank of life, may, with due application in their vacant moments, be acquainted with the necessary truths and duties of our religion; besides that the Spirit of God is promised to sincere and diligent seekers, to faithful and humble inquirers, and shall be bestowed sufficiently to inform them of the sure way to eternal life. Prov. ii. 1, 6, "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Luke xi. 13, "Your heavenly Father shall give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." And the Spirit is sent to guide the faithful into all truth, John xvi. 13.

The wisdom, the equity, and the goodness of God, seem all to concur in fixing matters of necessary belief and practice in this situation, that they should be often and plainly exprest. If there be any particular doctrine or duty which I find written but in one single text of Scripture, or expressed but darkly, I should reasonably conclude the great God never designed that doctrine, or that duty, to be of very great importance in the Christian life: For a dark expression is much more easily mistaken



mistaken, as to the true sense of it; and a single text is more liable to be miscopied, or dropt by a transcriber, or be misconstrued by a translator, or overseen and neglected by a common reader or hearer; and the great God would not put matters of high importance on so doubtful and dangerous a foot, and leave things necessary at such uncertainties, lest honest and humble enquirers should, after all their pains, mistake their way to heaven.

A sudden thought of the form and order of baptism, prescribed to us, Matt. xxviii. 28, made me at first suspect, that there must be one exception made to this rule, about the frequent repetition of any doctrine or duty necessary to salvation; but upon a further consideration and review of things, it appears evident to me now, that though this appointment of the form of baptism, was prescribed to be done in the Name of the Holy Spirit, as well as of the Father and the Son, yet it was by no means necessary to the salvation of any man, and therefore there was no necessity of having it often repeated. Let us consider

1<sup>st</sup>, That the appointment of it is but once expressed, and that by one holy writer, and there is never an actual example or instance of this complete form of baptism practised in any place of Scripture. Observe that remarkable text, Acts xix. 2, where St. Paul enquired of the young converts that were baptised at Ephesus, "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? And they said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." He then enquired, "Unto what were ye baptised? And they said, Unto John's baptism." And Paul had told them that John taught them, "that they should believe on him that should come after him," that is, in Christ Jesus. "When they heard this, they were baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus." Whether they were baptised in the Name of

of the Holy Spirit, or no, is not actually expressed; which is something strange, when that was the chief point of enquiry concerning their baptism into the Holy Ghost.

Here also it may be observed, that those who were here baptised, Acts xix. 4, 6, immediately received the Holy Ghost: whence it may be very probably inferred, that some persons were baptized with the Holy Ghost itself, who were not actually baptised into the Name of the Holy Ghost.

Consider 2dly, When the business of baptism is mentioned in several places in the Epistles, it is generally declared that baptism was performed in the Name of the Lord Jesus. Rom. vi. 3, "So many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death. Gal. iii. 27, As many of you as have been baptised into Christ. 1 Cor. xii. 13, By one Spirit we are baptised into one body," i. e. Christ, as in the foregoing verse, but I can find no mention of the disciples being baptised into the Holy Ghost.

3dly, Though I am ready to believe from many expressions in the Primitive History of the Church, that the baptisers did usually keep to this form of words, "I baptise thee in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" yet it is evident, from a long account which Grotius gives us upon this text, Matt. xxviii. 18, that they used divers forms, that is, they sometimes expressed the Father by a Periphrasis, "The God of all, or the God of the whole, the God and Father of the whole:" Sometimes the Son was expressed by the "Word, or the only begotten Son of God:" Sometimes the Holy Ghost was expressed by the "Spirit who inspired the Prophets."

I might add, that upon their profession of the Christian religion, sometimes it is called the profession of the remission of sins, or the Catholic church, or everlasting life, but they never made  
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a scruple of their being rightly baptised into salvation upon any of these accounts; and I am persuaded that had the Apostles themselves, or the primitive Christians, thought it necessary to salvation, the form of baptism would have been more express in the history of it, and been more particularly repeated.

I think therefore the rule may stand good still, that where a doctrine or a duty is mentioned but in one single place of the Scripture, it cannot be of absolute necessity to salvation.

On the other hand, where particular truths or duties are often repeated in Scripture, and very plainly expressed in several places, it is hardly possible that they should be subject to these inconveniences. It is not to be supposed that the transcribers of the New Testament should make the same mistake in every place, where these propositions are mentioned; that they should drop them out of every chapter; that the translator should misconstrue them in every text; or that their misconstruction should always seem to make good sense in every context where they stand; or finally that the hearer or reader should always overlook them when they are found in so many passages, and so often occur to his eye.

But it is very apparent, and all men must acknowledge that matters of less moment, and things not necessary, are not mentioned so often: And when they are mentioned, the Scripture sometimes gives no determinations or positive injunctions about them; nor do the Apostles determine the smaller controversies with that plain, exact method of speech, which you find them use in the most substantial truths and duties. If we read the 14th chapter to the Romans, it must convince us of this assertion. St. Paul does not there decide the little controversies about observances of meats and days, but leaves them to charity. Nor are the lesser points

points of Christianity half so often mentioned, or urged with so much vehemence, as the grand duties of faith and love, repentance and holiness. In matters of lower concernment among the formalities and modes of religion, or even in some higher articles, whose circumstances and logical relations are not necessary to salvation, the Scripture has its almost insolvable difficulties and things, very hard to be understood by men in this state, at least by common readers.

Sometimes the matter is so sublime, so unlike all mortal affairs, and so divinely superior to every thing here below, that perhaps it was not possible to describe it fully and plainly in human words: And the more enlightened the writer was, the deeper and more inexpressible might some of the truths be which he reveals. Our Saviour has made some such discoveries at the latter end of his prayer, in the 17th of St. John's Gospel. Such are the doctrines of the union or oneness of Christ with God his Father, and the oneness or union of the saints with God and Christ. Some things are constrained to be expressed in a way less suitable to their own dignity, and yet even then they are not perfectly easy to be understood, for earthly metaphors will not convey to our thoughts a full idea of things divine and heavenly. When Christ had been teaching Nicodemus the doctrine of regeneration, John iii. 12, he adds, "If I had told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" The Apostle Paul, the most enlightened of all mere men, saw and heard some things among his visions and revelations, that were unutterable, 2 Cor. xii. And some things which he has published for the use of the church, according to the wisdom given to him, are hard to be understood, as St. Peter himself assures us, 2 Peter iii. 16.

Again.



Again. In matters which are prophetical, both in the Old Testament and in the New, there are many dark expressions, many parables and hard figures of speech, which are made use of, to express and convey some general and indistinct ideas of future events, which were not fit to be more fully revealed in that day, and which only the accomplishment was designed to explain to future ages. "When these things are come to pass, then shall ye know that I have foretold them," John xiii. 19, and xiv. 29, and xvi. 4.

The Spirit of God, for wise ends, hath expressed some things in particular seasons, whether doctrinal or prophetical, in obscure phrases, capable of a double interpretation. Other things are very briefly hinted, and the holy writer doth but just glance at them, and does not dwell upon them long enough to explain them, that being not his present design.

Some words are so ambiguous in the same chapter, that it is not easy to determine their precise sense in each verse; and these words also transferred into our language may not have the same distinct meaning as the original, and perhaps too, may be determined to the wrong sense by the translators; but the vulgar can read only their own language, and their judgments are determined by the translators opinion. The various meanings put on the words *νόμος* the law, *ἐκκλησία* the church, *χειροτονία* to ordain, *ἐπίσκοπος* a bishop or overseer, &c. sufficiently prove this.

Besides, the sense of many a Scripture depends not merely on the literal construction of the words, but on the knowledge of the context, and on the consideration of the scope and design of the writer, and perhaps the deeper design of the Spirit of God that inspired him. It depends on the character of the person that writes, and on the character and condition

condition of the persons to whom he writes, into what errors or evil practices they were fallen, at what times, and under what circumstances these things fell out: All which it is impossible every mechanic should know, and but few scholars are well acquainted with. These difficulties in Scripture occasion different opinions among the readers; and because each would impose his sense upon all the rest of Christians, a thousand quarrelling folios have sprung.

There is another difficulty and shade of darkness which falls upon many texts of Scripture, and particularly in the New Testament, from the extraordinary actions, and modes of actions, in the primitive and inspired times. It is certain that some things recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and occasionally spoken of in the Epistles, refer only to the extraordinary and inspired transactions of those miraculous times, and cannot be imitated by us. Such are the communication of gifts by the imposition of hands, the healing the sick by anointing with oil, the multitude of useful speakers in one assembly, the speaking various languages in public worship, if an interpreter were present, &c. It is as certain also, that some things are recorded in some of those Scriptures, as patterns and directions for our imitation in all ages. Such are the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, the choice of deacons, the ordination of overseers or bishops, the practice of occasional communion, &c. But there are some circumstances relating to these actions, concerning which it is hard to determine, how far they belong to the extraordinary affairs of that day, and how far they are rules for our conduct in ordinary cases.

Now from all these differences have arisen many laborious and angry volumes of noise and wrangle, about the mint, the annise, and the cummin, about the dress and the fringes of religion, which have  
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vexed the world, and disquieted and divided the church of Christ.

Notwithstanding all these difficulties in Scripture, and the divided sentiments of men about them; yet there is no room for the Popish doctrine of the insufficiency of the Holy Scriptures; no need of any living judge of controversies, or a seat of infallibility on earth; for the grand doctrines and duties which are necessary to salvation, such as repentance toward God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as a Prophet, a High-Priest, and a King, the necessity of universal holiness, pardon of sin through the blood of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal rewards and punishments in the world to come. All these, I say, are written down in Scripture, in as plain and express a manner as the nature and importance of them required; and about these things persons of a sober, humble, and honest mind cannot well mistake, if they are diligent in their enquiry, and seek wisdom of that God who gives liberally, and upbraids us not with our own folly.

Not only are all matters necessary to salvation written plain enough for every reader, but we have also, as I hinted before, the promise of the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to teach us to understand all such revelations, that sincere and diligent men may not be suffered to fall into such a mistake as to fail of acceptance with God. Nay, further, we have good encouragement to hope, that even in some things on which salvation doth not necessarily depend, but are only designed to promote the farther sanctification and comfort, peace and hope of the church, the Spirit of God will often assist the upright and humble seeker, yet still there will remain difficulties enough to exercise inquisitive souls, for I find no certain promise, that God will always satisfy every sincere enquirer in the full meaning of all difficult texts.

“ I glorify

“ I glorify thee, O my God, that thou hast not confined the knowledge of thyself to the wise and the learned world, but hast written down the way of salvation so plain, that a child may read and attain it. Let the scribes, doctors, and critics of the age, wrangle about the pins of the tabernacle; and the seats in the synagogue, let them contend, even to blood, about the *ofs*, the *ands*, and the *moreovers* of the Bible, my soul shall dwell in peace, and rest on these pillars of safety, even the great and evident doctrines of the Christian faith. “ I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast revealed thyself and thy Son unto babes,” and hast not made it a matter of wit and criticism to be a Christian. The foolish, the base, and the weak things of this world, are chosen to salvation, and they understand, believe, and practise all the necessary articles, while they may differ from each other in some lesser forms of worship and discipline, and are not able to maintain an argument on either side.”

What is here asserted concerning the substance of the less necessary articles of our religion, viz. that they are somewhat obscurely expressed in Scripture; the same may be applied also to the circumstantial topics, to the appendices, and the logical relations, even of the greatest and most necessary points of Christianity, as I hinted before. Though the practice of repentance, and the promises of pardon; though justification by faith, and the death of Christ as a ransom for sinners, are so often and so plainly affirmed; yet it is not affirmed so often, nor so plain in Scripture, what logical relation faith bears to our justification; whether it is a condition as some make it, or a receiving instrument, as others suppose.

It is evident beyond all doubt, that where the Gospel comes, “ he that believes shall be saved:” But whether faith saves us as it is a mere de-



pendance on Divine Grace, or, on the priesthood of Christ, or whether it saves us rather as a hearty belief of the Gospel and the Grace of it, even such a belief as comes to be the spring of our holiness, this is not so exceeding evident as to leave no room for controversy.

It is revealed in Holy Scripture, that without repentance we can never be saved, nor shall any of our iniquities be forgiven without a sincere conversion to God; but to declare with utmost exactness and full assurance, what logical relation our repentance bears to our pardon, Scripture hath not taught us quite so fully, nor so clearly described it.

It is sufficiently plain to every reader of the Bible, that holiness of heart and life is of absolute necessity to our entrance into heaven, for "without holiness no man can see God." But how far, and in what precise sense, this holiness and obedience to the commands of God can give a right to enter into the gates of the city, is something harder to determine; or what is that sort of right or title which our own sincere obedience gives us to the immediate possession of blessedness; though we are fully assured, from several places in the word of God, it is very different from the right which we obtain by the obedience and sufferings of Christ.

In some places the sacred writer seems to mention one doctrine, while he is pursuing some one subject with warmth and zeal; in other places of Scripture the contrary seems to be signified or hinted; now both these in the literal sense, and without limitation, cannot be true. And which of these two texts must be reduced to the other, by certain distinctions and limitations, in order to a reconciliation, is not so easy always to determine: For in some instances it may happen, that the proposition which is but implied in one text, is nearer the truth than another proposition which seems to  
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be expressed in another place; which can only be decided by a due survey of the context, and the different designs of the writer, and a comparison of other Scriptures.

Therefore, if we will dispute about these solemn subjects, let our warmest zeal and our sharpest weapons be engaged against those adversaries of the Gospel, who attempt to ruin the foundations of it; let us contend most earnestly for the defence of what God most obviously and incontestably reveals; but our coolest debates, our candor and charity, rather than fierceness, should be employed about the points of more dubious discovery. At best, we should maintain great moderation so long, till we find the lesser errors spreading like a secret gangrene, and drawing along with them dismal consequences, till they are observed to infect the more substantial parts of Godliness, and endanger the very essence of Christianity.

If our reverend fathers and brethren have shewn a fiery zeal about these lesser errors, I would persuade myself their chief motive was a suspicion of danger and ruin to the Gospel itself, in the liberty, in the purity, and in the glory of it, if they should have connived at these lesser mistakes, or treated them with a cold indifference. And it is possible, that sometimes they might have reason for their suspicion and their zeal, though it may be confessed they were but men, and their fervor might sometimes exceed due bounds.

But, in general, as to these meaner points, moderation is our duty: "Whereto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, and if any be otherwise minded, God, in his most proper season, will reveal it also to them," Phil. iii. 15, 16. It is as if the blessed Apostle had said, that those who trust only in Christ as the ground of their acceptance before God, shall be joyfully received to join their right hand of fellowship with mine; and if they

do but pursue holiness sincerely from the plainer motives of Christianity, though they are not well acquainted with those most noble principles of it, viz. Communion with a suffering, dying, and rising Saviour, as a Representative, Pledge, and Pattern of spiritual dying to sin, and resurrection into holiness, which are contained in verse 10, yet I will not disturb them about it, but hope God will discover it to them in his time.

Yet further, as the great doctrines of Christianity and the necessary duties of it, are very much distinguished from the less necessary points, and the circumstantials of those duties, by their greater evidence and clearness of revelation; so the more substantial parts of the worship appointed in the Gospel, may be distinguished from the less important modes and circumstances. Solemn prayer to God, preaching the word, administration of the ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper, and a due attendance thereon, are plainly and certainly required of us that assume the name of Christians in our sacred assemblies. But whether we may borrow assistance from composed forms in preaching, praying, and other administrations; or whether we must renounce all use of forms, books, and notes, to aid our invention, memory, and expression, in prayers and sermons, are mere accidental matters, and not written in Scripture. So whether the person baptised must be sprinkled or immersed, and whether the communicants at the Lord's table must sit, stand, or kneel, are less essential considerations, and have been the subjects of dubious enquiry.

Again. In the constitution, order, and government of a church, the same distinction may be made also. That persons professing the name of Christ should agree to walk and worship together, at stated seasons, in the fellowship of the Gospel, seems to be a demand of the law of nature, and sufficiently

sufficiently confirmed by many directions or examples, in positive expressions of Scripture too; that every such congregation of faithful people, or voluntary society of Christians, is a Church of Christ; that they ought to seclude or put away from their number, the grossly ignorant, the scandalous, and the profane, and to withdraw from those that walk disorderly; that there should be persons appointed to minister to them in holy things, and that the society should honour and maintain them: All these seem to be plain and undoubted duty.

But whether this society may receive and exclude members, without or against the consent of their Pastor; whether there must be any Elders in a Church, distinct from and inferior to the Pastor or Bishop; whether the Minister needs the imposition of the hands of several Presbyters, or the superior episcopal consecration; or whether he be sufficiently ordained by the choice of the society, his solemn acceptance, and his own and their devoting him to God in that office by fasting and prayer; these things are not quite so evident in the New Testament. And while we are required to have no fellowship with the openly wicked, though they are pretended professors of religion, yet we are commanded to receive the weak in the faith, and to hold communion with them in common Christianity, though we may all differ in doubtful disputations.

§ 2. I am easily aware that the men of heat and party, will lift up their hands in wonder, when they read this catalogue and distinction of the affairs of Christianity. I see them already kindling into rage against me; they encompass my tent and proclaim war. And upon a review of their numbers and their zeal, I cannot find an advocate wanting for any one party, among the common professors of the religion of Christ in England. I



see there *Merges* and his neighbour *Aspergio*; I find *Sedentius* and *Genicola* both there; *Piscopion*, *Classicus*, and *Antipas*, are come thither also. Each of them a prince of their tribe, and either a head or a very forward member of the family of their fathers. Just so the children of Israel began to denounce war against their brethren Gad and Reuben, when they built an altar of witness to maintain their communion with the rest of their tribes, while they were dissenters only in point of habitation, and dwelt beyond Jordan. These party-men are full of faith and certainty in every opinion; they embrace none as brethren in Christ, who do not wear their garb and talk not exactly in their language; nor will they hold communion with those that dissent from them in the least punctilios of the form or worship of Christians. "If men depart from the truth, say they, they are in the way of error: and it is all one whether they depart little or much, since they have forsaken the truth, we ought to forsake them."

These warm zealots are not used to admit of any doubt in the smallest circumstantial of religion, and because they have learnt of their teachers to affirm all their tenets with equal confidence, they believe that the Scripture reveals them all with equal evidence. A metaphor smiling upon their practice, is an express command. They can read their indispensable duty in a single and dubious example. A remote conclusion of their own drawing, at the end of a long chain of consequences, gives them resistless conviction, and appears in their eye as bright, though distant, as the morning-star. A circumstance or two of matter of fact determines their judgment unchangeably, for or against an opinion, which at most is but feebly favoured by those very circumstances; a little criticism on a single Greek word, in some single text of Scripture, becomes a firm foundation for their faith:

faith: They force some text or other to prove every thing which they say, and when they have imposed their sense on the words of the holy writers, they are sure the Evangelists and the Apostles are of their mind. Each of them have picked up some scraps of the arguments of their party, and they fancy themselves well equipped and furnished for the defence of the truth.

*Merges*, a very honest man in the main, is newly come out of the water, and glows all over with zeal and assurance, that there can be no baptism without plunging. He makes a mere jest of sprinkling, and declares that if we are not covered with water, we are not buried with Christ. "No honest man," says he, "could ever doubt that John's disciples were immersed at Enon, for the Scriptures say, *There was much water there*, John iii. 23.

*Aspergio*, a bold talker, is as confident that sprinkling, or pouring water on the head, is a true method of baptism, and is ready to say severe things against the practice of immersion, as if it were not only needless, but, as they are ready to call it, foolish and sinful.

"It is plain," saith he, "in the word of God, that the Apostles were baptised with the Spirit, which can never mean that they were dipt or plunged into the Spirit, but only that the Spirit was poured out upon them: And when the Israelites were baptised into Moses, it is plain they were only sprinkled with the cloud and the sea, Matt. iii. 11, compared with Acts ii. 3, 17, and 1 Cor. x. 2. And therefore," says he, "I wonder that any man should be so weak as to give himself the trouble of dipping, when he has such texts as these to prove sprinkling."

*Sedentius*, a weak and warm dissenter, is just come from St. Paul's Cathedral. Being urged by great curiosity, with much ado he obtained leave of his conscience to go thither, and see men receive

the Lord's supper kneeling. As he returns, he is almost ready to pronounce damnation against the organs and singing-men, for they are all, saith he, the limbs of antichrist. He whispers damnation against these idolators, that bow before a piece of bread; for they look as though they worshipped the host, and belonged to Rome. He is very positive that sitting is a posture of absolute necessity in that ordinance, for Jesus and his disciples did sit and eat, Mark xiv. 8, 1 Cor. xi. 20; and since it is called the supper of the Lord, we must sit down while we partake of it, for every child knows that men are never wont to kneel at supper.

On the other hand, *Genicola* hates the Presbyterians, for their scandalous irreverence at the sacrament. "What," saith he, "dare any man use so clownish and so rude a gesture as sitting, when he receives the seal of the pardon of his sins, and the emblems of the body and blood of Christ?" And he forbids all such worshippers from his communion with this sentence, *Hence ye profane creatures*, though he can hardly pretend to bring one text of Scripture for his own practice. He is sure also that the surplice, a sign or token of purity, and as our reformers teach, ought to be worn at prayer, for we must lift up hands of purity and innocence when we come before God; and he finds the long white garment in these words, "Let all things be done decently, and in order," 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

"To me," saith *Piscopion*, "it is as clear as the light, that no man can be a minister of Christ, unless the hands of a superior man, even a Diocesan Bishop, have been upon his head; and all the preachings and ministrings of such a presumptuous wretch, who was not thus ordained, are but vain babblings, empty trifles, and impudent usurpations, in the name of the Lord: For thus saith the Common Prayer Book, which was made by saints and martyrs,

martyrs, "It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostles time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons." Thus he proceeds triumphant where the Civil Government is on his side, and will yield to no man in argument or dispute.

*Classicus* arises in warm opposition to the prelacy, and asserts it an indisputable truth, that no minister of Christ is superior to another. "I read," saith he, "in my Bible, no distinction between Bishops and Presbyters; they are the same officers in Scripture: And the power of Synods is so plainly instituted at the Council at Jerusalem, (Acts xv.) that I am amazed this should be esteemed a matter of doubt or difficulty; and I am well assured of this, because Timothy had the hands of the Presbytery laid upon him, 1 Tim. iv. 14, there is no man above or below a Presbyter has any thing to do in ordaining ministers since the Apostles are dead."

*Antipas* grows impatient at these bold assertions, and asserts with as much boldness, that the power of ordaining all sorts of officers in the church belongs properly to the brethren of a single congregation, and none besides have any authority to meddle with it, since the race of inspired men are dead and gone. The brethren have all the power in their hands, and it is the church alone that has any manner of right to chuse, approve, and establish its own Pastors, Elders, Overseers, and Deacons: For is it not said, Acts vi. 3, "Look out among you seven men," &c. And if this be done at the choice of Deacons, why not of Elders too? The learned say, that the word in Greek, which is used for ordaining of Elders, signifies the choice or lifting up the hands of the brethren to vote for them. Whatsoever particulars are disputed in church government, the power of the people must be ever



acknowledged and received, as a fundamental and immovable truth.

Among all these combatants there is not one but is so positive in his own sentiments, that one would think they had received all their opinions by inspiration, or that Christ and his Apostles had been precisely of their party, and had written their opinions down in express words. And not only are they so assured of the truth of their tenets, but the vast importance of them too: And each of them grows angry that his own particular opinion should be reckoned among the less evident or the less important points of religion. Their fury boils high, and the mistaken zeal and warm ferment of their passion swells every punctillio to a mountain, and makes every particle of their opinions fundamental. They do not observe how swift their career and violence carries each of them besides or beyond their text, and thus they are sometimes hurried on beside the goal of truth, and I am persuaded their assurance always runs too fast for their evidence, and reaches far beyond it.

They commend and practise vehemence as a virtue, and so far forget their Bible as to believe all moderation to be a mere spirit of indifference, and unworthy of a good Christian. They all maintain opposite notions, yet by their temper and conduct they all seem to approve each other's zeal for his own party, and with one consent they vote me a mere latitudinarian, a lukewarm professor, a citizen of Laodicea, who has not a spark of zeal for the Gospel of Christ, the worship or the discipline of his church.

My dear zealous friends, be calm a little, and let me speak before I am condemned. I do not deny many of these things, which I call less important, to be some way discovered in the New Testament, though not in so express and plain language

language as you suppose. The chief concerns of the Christian church are so far prescribed by positive rules, by examples or just inferences, that a serious reader, who is attentive and unbiaſſed, and who will exereise his reasoning powers, may find sufficient notices of all necessary truth and duty. According to my measure of light, I humbly hope I have found it, and thereby regulate my practice.

But still it must be granted, that things less necessary are not so plainly described as the greater and more substantial parts of religion, nor graven in characters so large and obvious, that every one must needs discern them. Christ Jesus hath been as faithful in his house as Moses was, and has delineated the form, pattern, and order of it, so far as Infinite Wisdom thought necessary to carry on the grand designs of Grace and the Gospel: But some of the lesser pins in this spiritual tabernacle are not so clearly decyphered, as that every child may tell whether they must be round or square. There is nothing of so much weight depends upon them, and therefore there was no need for them to be so expressly described under the New Testament, wherein "bodily exercise profits little," but worship and religion consist more in what is spiritual and invisible.

Upon the whole, since there are different degrees of evidence, wherewith some of the doctrines of faith, and the rules of worship, in the New Testament, are express; there ought always to be found in us different degrees of assent or assurance, wherewith we should receive these doctrines or these rules of duty: For it is a certain and eternal rule of logic, that our assent to any proposition ought to be firm or feeble, just in proportion to the different degrees of evidence, whether they be brighter or more obscure.

Here then is a plain and general rule given us, whereby we may judge whether any particular

opinion or practice be more or less important, and consequently whether our zeal for it should be warmer or cooler, viz. Is the evidence of this practice, or this truth in Scripture more bright or cloudy? According to the light of evidence, such should our zeal be. Violence and fierce contention among Christians, especially about matters of lesser moment, or of doubtful dispute, are scandalous to the Christian name; and as they tend to ruin and destroy the church of Christ, so in all ages they have greatly grieved the souls of those who love the interests of Christianity, and wish well to Sion.

§ 3. If it would not offend my readers, I would here come to an ingenuous confession, that the different sentiments and dreadful quarrels of Christians, about some of the lesser things of religion, and the dark and dubious expressions in Scripture, wherein some parts of our religion are revealed, have sometimes been a sore temptation and sorrow to my heart, so that I have wished these doubtful disputables had been more clearly determined there. I have been plunged into the briars of this perplexity, when I have seen persons of devout soul, serious and humble, dissent so widely from each other, both in opinion and practice, and that in matters of some moment too, and even after long and honest enquiries into the meaning of God in his word.

Under these difficulties I have said in my heart, "Why did not the God of Wisdom and Love express every article of belief and duty in words of plainest revelation and precept, that we might have all read the same sense, and been all of one mind? Why did he leave the least point of our religion dubious or obscure, when, with a long foresight, he surveyed all the quarrels and rage, the infinite scandal, the cruelty and the blood, that in future ages would be the consequences of religious disputes?"

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I have been pained at my soul, and felt an inward afflicting heaviness in such a meditation as this; nor could I ever satisfy myself with that profane answer which some witty men have given, viz. "That God, who might have made the rules of our duty plain and undisputed, chose to express them in words capable of several interpretations, that Christians might be liable to be led into many different opinions, that hereby God might please himself with the variety of devotions that were paid him; and that how different soever their sentiments and practices might be, yet that his commands are equally obeyed by all the various kinds of worship and service, which the consciences of men sincerely conceive themselves bound to offer." This notion inclines to that wild opinion, which supposes that any forms or methods of worship are all equally acceptable to God, and that there are more true religions than one. This favours so much of the Deist and the Libertine, and the disciples of the leviathan, that I could never admit it into my assent.

Yet it must be granted that his wisdom had some very valuable end to attain in the way of providence, by permitting so many differences amongst Christians; and if we had been secretaries to the King of Heaven, when he formed his designs, we might have known perhaps some of these awful arcana of his government; but who has been his counsellor, or to whom has he given an account of these matters? His paths are in the great deep, and his providences are trackless through the mighty waters. "How unsearchable are his ways, and his judgments past finding out!" I dare not pretend to write a complete *Rationale* on all his infinite and impenetrable designs; yet my faith assures me that they have all the highest and divine reason in them. And I will take the freedom here to mention some of those considerations that have silenced my clamorous



morous thoughts, pleased my enquiry, satisfied my conscience, and vanquished the dark temptation.

First, By these doubtful disputables among the accidental things of religion, God tries our sincerity, whether we will hold fast the substantials. The constancy and courage of a soul devoted to God is exercised and proved, amidst the noisy contests of the men of party and angry zeal; and when it persevereth in a course of Christianity, notwithstanding all these stumbling-blocks, it approves itself to God, its judge and rewarder. The differences of true Christians in some parts of their faith and worship, have frightened and scandalized the hypocrite and the giddy professor; their heads have been turned round with every wind of doctrine, because their hearts have not been established in the way of holiness; they have cast off all the articles and practices of religion, because they find so many sects divided by their little particularities, and cannot determine every circumstance of truth and duty.

There were divisions and parties, schisms and sects, in the Corinthian church, "and they must be," saith the Apostle, "that they that are approved may be made manifest among you," 1 Cor. xii. 19. Our Lord Jesus forewarns his disciples, that offences will come, and it is not possible that it should be otherwise; "there shall be variance and strife in a man's own household: But blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me; he that persevereth to the end, the same shall be saved," Luke xvii. 1, Matt. xi. 6. There are many things in the Christian religion that become stones of stumbling, and rocks of offence: Blessed are the upright that hold on their course for heaven, and whose feet stumble not upon these dark mountains, because of their neglect to search out the truth, or their wilful obstinacy in dangerous errors.

Secondly,

Secondly, Not only our sincerity towards God, but our charity towards fellow Christians is hereby put to the trial, and charity is the very livery of the disciples of Christ. "Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another," John xiii. 35. The Lord hath commanded all his sheep to wear this mark of distinction from the world, how different soever their lesser opinions are among themselves. Where I behold the image of Christ, my Lord, stamped in legible characters upon my neighbour, can I love him with warm affection, though he never frequents the same place of worship with me, though he wears a garment of another shape and colour, prays in a set form of words which I cannot perfectly approve, and subscribes a creed of different expressions, though the same in sense and meaning? Can I receive this good man into my very soul, who eats nothing but herbs, and will not sit down at my table because flesh is eaten there? Can I love him at my heart that loves Jesus the Lord, though he will not religiously observe the festival of his birth or ascension? Or do those little words, Christmas and Holy Thursday, set my heart at a distance from him, and make him forfeit all my charity? Such queries as these may be a touchstone of our graces, and the test of true love to Christ and his saints.

There seems to be something of this design in our Lord Jesus Christ, when he ordered his servant Paul to write the fourteenth chapter to the Romans, where the Apostle, though he gives a hint of his own opinion and liberty in the Gospel, with regard to meats and days, yet he doth not impose the same observations and abstinences on other Christians; and though he was inspired, yet he leaves these things still indifferent, and calls them "doubtful disputations." Now as "the trial of our faith," through manifold temptations, "is much more precious than that of gold that perishes;"

perishes;" so the trial of our love, passing through the smoaky fires of contention and dispute, and not mingling therewith, is discovered to be a pure, divine flame, and "shall be found to praise, honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, we love," 1 et. i. 7.

Thirdly, Perhaps our Lord might leave some lesser points of religion more obscurely expressed in his word, because he designed to continue a ministry in his church to the end of the world, or till he came again. While other Christians have their hours and thoughts engrossed by the cares of this life, and want leisure, and skill, and means, to acquaint themselves with all the difficult and more abstruse parts of religion, it is the business of the men, that are honoured and employed in the sacred office, to give themselves to reading, to search into the hidden things of God, and explain the more doubtful paragraphs of his word unto men.

I grant that the first and grand design of their studies and public labours should be to preach the Gospel of the Grace of God, and reconciliation by Jesus Christ, and to make the necessary articles of faith and practice plain to the meanest soul. But a minister is also required to converse not only with those Scriptures which will make him wise to final salvation, but with those also which may thoroughly furnish him to every good word and work, 2 Tim. iii. 17; that he may know how to speak a word in season to every weary soul, and to draw consciences out of perplexity, which are vexed with scruples of less important things; to instruct them in the mind and will of Christ, about the methods of his worship, and the order of his church, to shew them the pattern and fashion of the house of God, and all the ordinances, and the forms and the laws thereof. And that is a part of his duty, at proper seasons, in some of his public ministrations; for he must conceal nothing of the counsel of God from

from them, that may be useful or profitable to men. The methods of his worship, and institutions of his Gospel, should be treasured up in his heart; and upon proper occasions, of private visit and conference, "the lips of the priest should make it appear that they keep knowledge, that the law may be sought at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts," Mal. ii. 7.

Not that every man is bound to pay an implicit faith and blind obedience to the opinions and dictates of his Bishop or Presbyter: But Christians ought to give due attention to the advice and counsel of such as are set over them in the Lord, Heb. xiii. 17, 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16. Such as are solemnly devoted to the ministry of the Gospel, and have addicted themselves to the study of the Scriptures, and are chosen by the people to be their teachers, and set apart for that office in the way they best approve; and so far as their advice is conformable to the written word, they are to receive it as from some of the messengers of Christ.

We may humbly suppose a fourth design which God had in his eye when the sacred penmen wrote so many verses of Holy Scripture, which God knew were so difficult to be interpreted; and that is, that no Christian might put the Bible out of his own hands, or neglect to read, and meditate, and study the word of God; and that together with their reading, they might constantly implore the presence of the Spirit, the enlightner and the comforter, to lead them into all truth. It is the duty of every man, so far as his capacity and opportunities of life will admit, to study the Holy Scriptures himself, and to see with his own eyes what he must believe, and what he must practise.

We should imitate the example of the noble Bereans, Acts xvii. 11, who searched the Scriptures with diligence, and brought the sermons of Paul himself unto that sacred touch-stone, to see if the things



things which he spoke were true. And after all our study, we shall find such difficulties that will convince us of the necessity of depending upon a higher teacher, even the Holy Spirit. Our blessed Saviour commands that we search the Scriptures, and pray for the Spirit too, John v. 39, Luke xi. 9, 13. And St. Paul prays unto God, that he would give to the saints which were at Ephesus, that Spirit of wisdom and revelation to enlighten the eyes of their understanding, Ephes. i. 17. This unction which true believers have from the Holy One, makes known to them all things necessary to salvation, 1 John ii. 20. And though we have no ground to expect that he will unfold to us every difficulty, while we live in this world; yet we may humbly hope, that in those things which regard the forms of his own worship, and the means of his own visible glory amongst men, he will by degrees let some divine rays of light into the mind of him that seeks after truth, with great diligence, fervent prayer, and most sincere designs. There are many instances to be given of plain Christians, that have been made the favourites of the enlightening Spirit, and have arrived at uncommon knowledge in Christianity, by these methods.

A fifth blessed end, and which is certainly attained in the providence of God, by leaving so many disputables in religion is, that our souls are hereby drawn out to long for heaven, and pant after the state where there is no contention. This prospect renders those happy regions more desirable whilst we are here, and more abundantly welcome hereafter.

It is impossible that any controversy should there arise, to interrupt the worship of the church triumphant. It is eternally impossible to divide them into parties, or to disturb their repose. The doctrines of their profession are all written as with sun-beams; they are no longer the articles of faith,

faith, but the objects of sight. We shall be all taught of God, we shall see face to face, and know as we are known. So much of the Holy Spirit dwells in all the saints, as a perpetual spring of wisdom. The discipline of that church can occasion no disputes, for the Son of God, in our nature, is the Bishop, he keeps the keys of heaven in his own hands, and the keys of death and hell. The soul that is once admitted into that fellowship, shall abide like a pillar in the temple of his God, and shall go no more out; but the hypocrite and the unclean shall never enter there. The worship that is paid there, is with perfect uniformity of mind and affection, amongst all the happy spirits; an unanimous consent in self-abasement, divine honour and love. And perhaps, when our bodies shall be raised again to make a visible church in heaven, worship may be performed with a glorious liberty, and with such a pleasing variety of forms as glorified nature shall dictate, and our exalted reason approve; but still with the exercise of the same perfect love and delight among the worshippers, and under the influence of the same Spirit.

O the happiness of that upper region, where all the inhabitants are of one mind and one heart! Every doubt shall for ever vanish, for we shall behold all things without a cloud. In thy light, O Lord, we shall see light, and enjoy it. Every quarrel shall for ever cease, for we shall dwell in the land of harmony and love. Though our capacities, perhaps, may be of different sizes, yet we shall see all divine truths in the same light, and therefore our sentiments, at least in things of importance, shall differ no more; we shall be united to each other in the same band of love, nor can our affections be separated any more for ever. That light and that love springs from the ever-blessed God: God, the Creator, communicating himself to all his holy and happy creation, and holding

holding them fast to himself for ever, in and by that glorious person, Christ Jesus, his Son and image; for "in him must all things be gathered together in one, and all things reconciled unto God in him, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." Then shall the prophecy of Zachariah be fulfilled, "The Lord shall be King over all the earth, there shall be one Lord, and his Name one," in the fullest meaning of that expression. Nor shall the saints be distinguished by different parties or denominations, but their hearts and their names shall be all one. According to those expressions of inconceivable glory, wherein our Lord describes the things which are truly unspeakable, all the saints shall be one, "As thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," John xvii. 21.

O with what pleasure have I often read, and methinks would be always reading, those words of a great man, spoken at the funeral of his fellow saint.\* "When death shall have set us free from all sorts of distempers, and brought us into the state of perfected spirits, how delectable will the society be, when all shall be full of divine life, light, love, and joy, and all freely communicate, as they have received freely! But above all that is conceivable in that other state, how delectable will their society be in worship, in the unanimous adoration of the ever-blessed God, Father, Son, and Spirit! O the inexpressible pleasure of this consociation in worship, perpetually tendered with so absolute a plenitude of satisfaction in the dueeness of it, and the gustful apprehension of what those words import, "Worthy art thou, O Lord." Each one relishing his own act, with just self approbation and high delight, heightened by their apprehended perfect unanimity, and that there is

\* Mr. Howe's Funeral Sermon for Dr. Bates.

among them no dissenting vote. Whence it cannot be but to worship God in spirit and in-truth, must be to enjoy him, and that he is not under any other notion, a satisfying object of our enjoyment, more than he is the object of our worship."

These are beams of celestial light for souls to drink in, and to live upon them, while we are passing onward to these fair mansions, through a wilderness of doubts and darknells. These are words of harmony and love, to entertain our ears, and make us deaf to the noise of a wrangling and disputing world. This is a heaven worth wishing for, while we are travelling to it through this tiresome earth, this unhappy state of vexation and controversy. To this let us look, with eyes of ardent expectation, and the devoutest wishes of soul. To this let us all aspire and hasten, who have groaned long under our own ignorance, and been burdened and grieved with the quarrels of the Christian church; and whatsoever name or party we have chosen in our divided opinions, let us unite our hearts and voices in this loud request, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly!* Amen.

## ESSAY IX.

AN APOLOGY for the different JUDGMENTS and PRACTICES of sincere CHRISTIANS, that are weak in Knowledge.

*In a Letter to a Friend.*

GIVE me leave, my dear friend, to make a charitable apology for honest and upright souls, who maintain a strict course of piety and virtue, and yet appear to be unalterably determined for or against the communion of the church of England, upon very slight or feeble grounds. Perhaps we shall learn compassion to the weaknesses of



of our fellow Christians, if you and I together meditate on these following considerations.

Let us take a survey how many are the circumstances and various occurrences of human life, which do sometimes powerfully determine the opinions even of good and sober men, to one or the other side of this controversy, whether they shall fix their communion in the church of England, or amongst those who separate from it.

Here the first thing that naturally occurs, is the education of different persons, which has a mighty influence to form their opinions, and to fix their practice; and this, it must be confessed, is not in a man's own choice. The providence of the great and blessed God, the over-ruler of all things, determines this affair in a wise and holy manner, whatever the final event may be.

*Jonathan* goes to worship every Lord's Day where his Father goes, and as the child was never led to hear a sermon at a public church, so the youth grows up in a groundless aversion to it, and the man stands at a wider distance, and can hardly be persuaded to venture in.

By use and custom from his very childhood, he understands the methods of the dissenters worship, and the terms that are used in their sermons; and if by any strange occasion he is led to the church of England, he finds no profit by hearing a clergyman preach, for he does not clearly take in the expressions and the meaning; and it must be acknowledged, many of them have a different way of managing the word of God, in their explications of it, different phrases and modes of expression, and too many of them preach doctrines different from their own articles and our common faith; these things are shocking and offensive to the ear, rather than instructive or edifying to a new hearer.

Besides, *Jonathan* has imbibed long prejudices against the modes of worship and ceremonies of  
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the church; the forms; the gestures; the vestments, the responses, &c. and his soul is thereby mightily unfitted for edification by the prayers of the church of England, that are mingled and interwoven with them; his palate is so much disgusted with this sort of entertainment before hand, that he either disrelishes or neglects whatever solid and wholesome food is set before him in the sermon that follows. I will not say, there is nothing of this folly owing to the influences of his education; but it is hard, if not impossible, to amend or prevent all the faults of this kind in the education of children, by the best and wisest of parents.

These things, joined together, put a strong bias upon the judgment of the man, and it is exceeding difficult to be removed; and it is evident that his prayers, his practice in religion, his secret acts of devotion, are all regulated by the instructions he has received from his parents or some of his teachers. This makes his spirit grow uneasy under ceremonious forms, and he is quite untuned for devotion, by the very sound of the organ. These things must needs have a mighty force on the minds of young sincere creatures beginning their course of religion and christianity, to establish them in the nonconformist way.

And I might also add, how rude and indecent a thing the plain and natural worship of the dissenters appears to one, that has been bred up to ornament and ceremony, in the several parts of worship in the established church.

By education and custom, a particular form of religion is so mingled with their nature, and wrought into their constitution, that you might as soon alter their palates, and change their taste of meats, as you can persuade their souls to dislike the ministry under which they have been brought up, and to forsake the mode of worship to which they have been trained. They are so positive they  
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are in the right, that they never had any thought of calling these things to a new examination.

Secondly, The prejudice of the mind in favour of the dissenters grows yet stronger, if Jonathan has found his soul awakened to a fear of hell, and been effectually convinced of sin by the terrors of the law under the preaching of some *Boanerges*, some son of thunder in a meeting-house; and has been afterwards led gently into the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Saviour, and has been taught to apply himself unto him for salvation by humble faith.

If the Spirit of God has made the preaching of pardon and grace, by a dissenting minister, effectual to calm the surges of his troubled conscience, and to lead him in the way of peace and holiness towards heaven, perhaps he feels his passions refined, his sinful appetites mortified, his temper changed from earthly and carnal, to spiritual and heavenly, how naturally will his whole soul be carried out to love this ministry? And he would not willingly absent himself one day from the teachings of this *Barnabas*, this son of consolation; he despises all the finer flourishes of eloquence, he can take no pleasure in the more polite, and perhaps more argumentative discourse of a Doctor or a Bishop in the Church of England; but where he has found light, and food, and rest, for his dark, distressed, and hungry soul, thither he will go constantly to worship, and he calls that the sanctuary of the Lord, without once enquiring whether a parish church may not be the sanctuary of the Lord too; nay, perhaps his passion for the dissenters may rise so high as to deny the presence of God in the assemblies of the established church, or to allow very little of it there.

And by the same false method of reasoning may a churchman, whose soul has been brought to repentance and holiness by the ministry of the public church,

church, on which he has attended, almost hate the name of a nonconformist, and severely inveigh against them all, as schismatics and foolish teachers, when perhaps he never ventured into a meeting-house, nor heard one sermon in any of their assemblies.

So far is it possible for piety, ignorance, and prejudice, to meet in the same mind: But our God, who knows the frame of human nature, looks down, and pities, and forgives. A hearty tendency towards God, and a pursuit of heaven is well-pleasing in his sight; though perhaps the traveller, through ignorance, takes many a wrong step, and performs many a duty not exactly conformable to the directions of the word.

Now, though this argument be sufficient to determine him to be a Christian, in opposition to other religions, because other religions have not this power to sanctify him, yet it ought not to be sufficient for ever to determine him to a particular party of Christians, because it was not the particular opinion of that party, but the substantial and great doctrines of Christianity or the Gospel, which are professed and pretended by both parties, that were so powerful to the turning of his heart towards God.

After all this discourse, I would not be understood as though I encouraged this laziness of men, and neglect of due and just reasoning; no, for reason is the talent that God hath given to be used in the affairs of religion, and he hath given us the rule of his own word for our determination, by which all our worship ought to be regulated, and not by human inventions; and men are highly guilty in their neglect hereof: But a gracious God will forgive, for he knows our frame and our frailty.

I believe God doth accept of such inward, sincere, and experimental arguments, as vulgar Christians use to make or keep themselves Churchmen



or Dissenters, Calvinists or Arminians. If they feel their souls raised to a more heavenly frame, and effectually engaged to the love of God, religion, and justice, by attending occasionally on a ministry different from their education, sometimes they will be ready to separate even from a true church to which they belonged, for want of knowing the guilt, and terrors, and damnation, that some men include in that hard word, *schism*; and I persuade myself, that a gracious God will accept of their upright designs and their honest motives, will pardon their separation, though it should prove unwarrantable, and bless their new communion to the advantage of their souls.

Thirdly. But suppose a man should forcibly divest himself of all former aversions and inclinations to the separate or the established churches, and enter into a sober search, and solemn debate with himself about the merits of the cause; how few are there, whose necessary affairs of life allow them time enough to go through the study of these laborious controversies? How small a part of mankind that are born to secular affairs, can, in their few hours of leisure, find out the depth of some of these difficulties? Who is sharp enough on the sudden, to distinguish truth in the midst of the clouds of dust that are cast on it, by the litigious wrangle of all parties?

The soul of many a tradesman is but just of a size with his shop and business, and hath not strength of parts or improvement, to attain great and accurate knowledge in any thing besides; and those whose ingenuity is greater, may easily waste all the spare hours of their life, in treading the mazes of dispute about forms and ceremonies, and at last find themselves bewildered. Now I question whether such a man's head would lie easy upon his dying pillow, who had spent his time among briars and thorns, and neglected the fruit of

of the tree of life, or tasted but very little of it; he has been dwelling upon the moss and the ivy, and not gathered the product of those eminent branches of our holy religion, whence he might extracted sweet cordials for a languishing and fainting hour.

Fourthly. Again, how few are there amongst the giddy race of men, that can so far annihilate their old opinions, and refrain so long from embracing new ones, till they have made a thorough scrutiny into the arguments on both sides? Who can dwell for months together in the uneasy state of dubitation? Who is there that has power enough over his own thoughts, as to hold his judgment in suspense for a considerable season, till the matter in question be fairly debated, and brought to an issue in the court of reason and scripture? How ready are we to incline our assent one way or another, as the various occurrences of life present shadows of argument for either opinion? A story of a wicked clergyman of the church will warp the enquiring soul of a plebeian towards a meeting-house; and an old song of Charles the martyr, will determine another's judgment against the cruel dissenters, and make him a complete churchman. A flash of rhetoric, a show of reason, a warm sermon, and affections raised by a Tillotson at Westminster, or a Mead at Pinners-Hall, will immediately turn the mind from its equilibrium; and you know when a balance is just turned, though it be but by a grain of weight, it falls effectually on that side, and sometimes almost irrecoverably too.

When we have thrown off all old prejudices, it is not easy to secure one's self from new ones. When we have so far gained the victory over education and custom, as to retain none of our ancient opinions, we are apt to fall insensibly under the power of the opposite doctrines, and become cap-

tives and slaves to new notions, merely because they are new. Novelty is as great a prejudice to fair reasoning as antiquity; though perhaps not so universally prevailing. And there is many a giddy and headstrong youth, that has hastily embraced maxims and practices contrary to those of his parents, to show how bravely he has broke all the fetters of education; and to make it appear that he thinks freely. When we push the boat off from the shore, where it has long stuck in the mud, it is hard to prevent its being stranded on the adverse side. It is exceeding difficult to keep the mind in this medium, till right reason determine it; it is very troublesome to maintain the judgment in a poise, till some weighty and solid argument sink one of the scales downward, and equitably decide the depending strife of opinions; there is need of continual caution, and wary motions of thought. A doubting spirit is in pain, and willing to be released. We are very desirous to believe somewhat, though upon slight grounds, that our souls may be at ease, and fall to practice.

Fifthly. But suppose men should have leisure, and books, and other advantages, joined with resolution and patience enough to endure the pain of dubitation, and the long fatigue of deep study and thoughtfulness; yet how small is the number of those that are capable to distinguish betwixt real and apparent reason; especially in subjects where the differences are of so nice and intricate a kind? How few understandings are so acute, how few judgments so solid and just, so well formed and well-improved, as to determine controversies so long and so much darkened? Who can see through all the false shows and pretensions of argument, and discern the true gold from that which only glisters?

Turn your eyes inward, my friend, and behold a soul there that has more knowledge and judgment

ment than hundreds of the animals that are round about you, and that you are forced to converse with; and yet after all your unbiassed searches, and labours, and earnest prayers, how hard a thing you find it to resolve the point, whether you ought to remain in the communion of a dissenting church, or become a separatist from them, and unite yourself to the church of England. Now, if all your leisure, your advantages, and your application, cannot fix your assent and practice, infer then how vain a thing it is to expect that reason and argument should constantly determine and govern a blind, a rash, and a wretched world.

I confess, in things of greater importance and necessity to salvation, our directions lie so plain, as to lead the most stupid souls that are honest and sincere, to the knowledge of truth and duty, unless it be here and there a man who violently breaks through the very language of Scripture, and runs into great errors or irregularity of practice. But in things of less moment, how impossible is it that the generality of mortals should build every lesser opinion of theirs, upon solid foundations and unshaken grounds? Or how can we expect they should be able to defend every smaller circumstance of their practice by just reasonings?

Since our first apostacy from God has so perverted and spoiled our rational powers, and enslaved our minds to so many prejudices and passions; since the impressions of education and custom are unavoidable and necessary, deep and strong; since the affairs of the world, that is under a divine curse, are so justly and unhappily ill constituted; since capacity, leisure, application, humility, and prayer, are all found together but in very few persons; and since the divine oracles, in matters less necessary, have so much obscurity in themselves, and so much thicker darkness cast upon them by contending parties, why should we be so much amazed



or so angry, to see so many different sentiments and practices amongst men of honest piety, and desirous of truth?

Farewel, thou dear companion of my studies, and if your light and knowledge should be so far improved by your further enquiries, as to lead you away from that communion, and those methods of worship, wherein we have so often, and so delightfully joined; yet I hope that upon the review of this letter, your will maintain a very charitable opinion of

Your unenlightened Friend, &c.

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